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# IN THE WILDERNESS

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First Published . . . February 8th 1917
Second Edition. . . . February 1917

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# IN THE WILDERNESS

## BOOK I

## HERMES AND THE CHILD

### CHAPTER I

AMEDEO DORINI, the hall porter of the Hôtel Cavour in Milan, stood on the pavement before the hotel one autumn afternoon in the year 1894, waiting for the omnibus, which had gone to the station, and which was now due to return, bearing—Amedeo hoped—a load of generously inclined travellers. During the years of his not unpleasant servitude Amedeo had become a student of human nature. He had learnt to judge shrewdly and soundly, to sum up quickly, to deliver verdicts which were not unjust. And now, as he saw the omnibus, with its two fat brown horses, coming slowly along by the cab rank, and turning into the Piazza that is presided over by Cavour's statue, he prepared almost mechanically to measure and weigh evidence, to criticize and come to a conclusion.

He glanced first at the roof of the omnibus to take stock of the luggage piled there. There was plenty of it, and a good deal of it was leather and reassuring. Amedeo had a horror of tin trunks—they usually gave such small tips. Having examined the luggage he sent a searching glance to two rows of heads which were visible inside the vehicle. The brawny porters hurried out, the luggage chute was placed in position, the omnibus door was opened, and the first traveller stepped forth.

A German of the most economical type, large, red, and wary, with a mouth like a buttoned-up pocket, was followed by a broad-waisted wife, with dragged hair and a looped-up

gown. Amedeo's smile tightened. A Frenchman followed them, pale and elaborate, a "one-nighter," as Amedeo instantly decided in his mind. Such Frenchmen are seldom extravagant in hotels. This gentleman would want a good room for a small price, would be extremely critical about the cooking, and have a wandering eye and a short memory for all servants in the morning.

An elderly Englishwoman was the fourth personage to appear. She was badly dressed in black, wore a tam-o'-shanter with a huge black-headed pin thrust through it, clung to a bag, smiled with amiable patronage as she emerged, and at once, without reason, began to address Amedeo and the porters in fluent, incorrect, and too carefully pronounced Italian. Amedeo knew her—the Tabby who haunts Swiss and Italian hotels, the eternal Tabby drastically complete.

A gay Italian is gaiety in flight, a human lark with a song. But a gloomy Italian is oppressive and almost terrible. Despite the training of years Amedeo's smile flickered and died out. A ferocious expression surged up in his dark eyes as he turned rather brusquely to scrutinize without hope the few remaining clients. But suddenly his face cleared as he heard a buoyant voice say in English :

" I'll get out first, Godfather, and give you a hand."

On the last word, a tall and lithe figure stepped swiftly, and with a sort of athletic certainty, out of the omnibus, turned at once towards it, and, with a movement eloquent of affection and almost tender reverence, stretched forth an arm and open hand.

A spare man of middle height, elderly, with thick grey hair, and a clean-shaven, much-lined face, wearing a large loose overcoat and soft brown hat, took the hand as he emerged. He did not need it ; Amedeo realized that, realized also that he was glad to take it, enjoyed receiving this kind and unnecessary help.

" And now for Beatrice ! " he said.

And he gave in his turn a hand to a girl who followed him.

There were still two people in the omnibus, the elderly man's Italian valet and an Englishman. As the latter got out, and stretched his limbs cramped with much sitting, he saw Amedeo, with genuine smiles, escorting the two girls and the elderly man towards the glass-roofed hall, on the left of which was the lift. The figure of the girl who had stepped out first was about to disappear. As the Englishman looked she vanished. But he had time to realize that a gait, the

carriage of a head and its movement in turning, can produce on an observer a moral effect. A joyous sanity came to him from this unknown girl and made him feel joyously sane. It seemed to sweep over him, like a cool and fresh breeze of the sea falling through pine woods, to lift from him some of the dust of his journey. He resolved to give the remainder of the dust to the public garden, told his name, Dion Leith, to the manager, learnt that the room he had ordered was ready for him, had his luggage sent up to it, and then made his way to the trees on the far side of the broad road which skirts the hotel. When he was among them he took off his hat, kept it in his hand, and, so, strolled on down the almost deserted paths. As he walked he tasted the autumn, not with any sadness, but with an appreciation that was almost voluptuous. He was at a time of life and experience when, if the body is healthy, the soul untroubled by care, each season of the year holds its thrill for the strongly beating heart, its tonic gift for the mind. Falling leaves were handfuls of gold for this man. The faint chill in the air as evening drew on turned his thoughts to the brightness and warmth of English fires burning on the hearths of houses that sheltered dear and protected lives. The far-off voices of calling children, coming to him from hidden places among the trees, did not make him pensive because of their contrast with things that were dying. He hailed them as voices of the youth which lasts in the world, though the world may seem to be old to those who are old.

Dion Leith had a powerful grip on life and good things. He was young, just twenty-six, strong and healthy, though slim-built in body, alert and vigorous in mind, unperturbed in soul, buoyant and warmly imaginative. Just at that moment the joy of life was almost at full flood in him, for he had recently been revelling in a new and glorious experience, and now carried it with him, a precious memory.

He had been travelling, and his wanderings had given him glimpses of two worlds. In one of these worlds he had looked into the depths, had felt as if he realized fully for the first time the violence of the angry and ugly passions that deform life ; in the other he had scaled the heights, had tasted the still purity, the freshness, the exquisite calm, which are also to be found in life.

He had visited Constantinople and had sailed from it to Greece. From Greece he had taken ship to Brindisi, and was now on his way home to England.

What he had thought at the time to be an ill chance had sent him on his way alone. Guy Daventry, his great friend, who was to go with him, had been seized by an illness. It was too late then to find another man free. So, reluctantly, and inclined to grumble a little at fate, Dion had set off in solitude.

He knew now that his solitude had given him keen sensations, which he could scarcely have felt with the best of friends. Never, in any company, had he been so repelled, enticed, disgusted, deeply enchanted, as on these lonely wanderings which were now a part of his life.

How he had hated Constantinople, and how he had loved Greece! His expectation had been betrayed by the event. He had not known himself when he left England, or the part of himself which he had known had been the lesser part, and he had taken it for the greater. For he had set out on his journey with his hopes mainly fixed on Constantinople. Its road of wildness and tumult, its barbaric glitter, its crude mixture of races, even its passions and crimes—a legend in history, a solid fact of to-day—had allured his mind. The art of Greece had beckoned to him; its ancient shrines had had their strong summons for his brain; but he had scarcely expected to love the country. He had imagined it as certainly beautiful, but with an austere and desolate beauty that would be, perhaps, almost repellent to his nature. He had conceived of it as probably sad in its naked calm, a country weary with the weight of a glorious past.

But he had been deceived, and he was glad of that. Because he had been able to love Greece so much he felt a greater confidence in himself. Without any ugly pride he said to himself: "Perhaps my nature is a little bit better, a little bit purer than I had supposed."

As the breeze in the public garden touched his bare head, slightly lifting his thick dark hair, he remembered the winds of Greece; he remembered his secret name for Greece, "the land of the early morning." It was good to be able to delight in the early morning—pure, delicate, marvellously fresh.

He sat down on a bench under a chestnut tree. The children's voices had died away. Silence seemed to be drawing near to the garden. He saw a few moving figures in the shadows, but at a distance, fading towards the city.

The line of the figure, the poise of the head of that girl with whom he had driven from the station, came before Dion's eyes in the twilight, evoked by the thought of Greece, the

remembrance of morning hours beside the sea at Phaleron. There was something in that girl, and not only in her appearance, the long line of her untrammelled figure, the gallant way in which she carried her head, but also in her voice and her movements, that reminded Dion of Greece.

She would surely have hated Constantinople as he had hated it.

Before he saw the coast-line of Greece, Dion had known what the country would mean to him. A message had been given to him far out at sea. He had travelled from the Golden Horn to the Piræus by a Roumanian boat on which were few people. Towards evening he had found himself quite alone on the vessel's upper deck, which was like an eyrie lifted high above the calm water. He was leaning over the rail, sleepily, almost anæsthetized by the strong and balmy airs, staring at the sparks of gold which every ripple held from the ship's wake of foam to the horizon, when out of the soft red of the West arose a mountain like a dream, tenderly classical in outline, calm, a point of rest for the eyes, the most delicate, pure thing, Dion thought, that he had ever looked upon. It bloomed in a robe of dusky purple against the sky, as a beautiful thought blooms in a peaceful mind, with something of reserve, but nothing of repellence. Its crest was lifted with confidence towards the first star of the night, its base was lost in the embracing seas. There was something in the shape of it that made Dion think of incense and of prayer.

This was the first Isle of Greece that he had seen, and long before it faded and was taken by the West he had understood its message. Again and again during his stay in Greece he had thought of that lovely isle as part of the soul of Greece—at Phaleron, on Cape Sunion, in the green wilds of Elis before the Hermes of Praxiteles, under the orange-coloured cliffs of Delphi, by night before the Parthenon. He loved it as a man loves a bearer of good tidings. He knew that he must always connect it in his mind with the thought of happiness, of the romance of happiness which belongs only to the few, which has its secrets, its deep seclusion, its remoteness from the anger and the dust of the world. Sometimes it seemed to Dion that if he were to lose everything, to receive every possible blow, to be plunged in all that was evil and hateful, to be overwhelmed by the ugliness and the filth of life, yet the remembrance of that Greek Isle, blooming against the West in the evening hour,

would keep the spark of hope for ever alive in his heart. It was a manifestation of untarnished beauty that helped him to believe in God, and even in himself.

Surely that girl would have loved his island!

As the thought came into Dion's mind, he saw two women approaching him, one taller than the other. They were walking more swiftly than Italian women often do, and, as they drew near to him, sent clear voices before them. They came up to Dion's bench and passed by, the girl of the omnibus and her sister. (The two were obviously sisters.) The taller of them was on the side of the path next to Dion. She no longer wore a veil. Dion saw that she was wonderfully fair, with pale yellow hair and a complexion that told of youth and abounding health. As Dion glanced up at her, she looked down at him for a moment. She was talking energetically, and he heard her say:

"... Those coral fishers who come there from Greece in the spring." And he saw a pair of very characteristic eyes looking by chance at his—large, steady, courageous, yellow-brown eyes that seemed full of kindness and cheerfulness.

When the two girls had vanished down the path into the autumn twilight, Dion repeated to himself:

"'... Those coral fishers who come there from Greece in the spring.'" And as the darkness drew nearer, and the bright-coloured leaves fell softly about him, his mind was filled with visions, and they were the visions of youth. The pearly wonder of morning was in them, the magical glimmer of Southern seas taking the sun. Fire-browned, half-naked fishermen greeted the light as if eager for the rapture of toil. And by the sea there were women.

For a moment Dion closed his eyes. He wanted to summon by an act of the will the sensations he had felt in Greece. Man was made surely for a shining world, was created for joy. The great Educator was joy. Greece had seemed to say that to him. The steady, courageous eyes of that girl—had they not echoed it? Sorrow, like sin, was an ugly thing, a thing not intended, that had forced its way into a scheme devised without preparation for it, an intruder not to be suffered, but to be driven out even with violence.

Violence in connexion with Greece! How men's thoughts wander! Dion smiled at his own vagaries. He opened his eyes. He was quite alone, and the garden was dark about him.

## CHAPTER II

ONE winter day in 1895—it was a Sunday—when fog lay thickly over London, Rosamund Everard sat alone in a house in Great Cumberland Place, reading Dante's "Paradiso." Her sister, Beatrice, a pale, delicate and sensitive shadow who adored her, and her guardian, Bruce Evelin, a well-known Q.C. now retired from practice, had gone into the country to visit some friends. Rosamund had also been invited, and much wanted, for there was a party in the house, and her gaiety, her beauty, and her fine singing made her a desirable guest; but she had "got out of it." On this particular Sunday she specially wished to be in London. At a church not far from Great Cumberland Place—St. Mary's, Welby Street—a man was going to preach that evening whom she very much wanted to hear. Her guardian's friend, Canon Wilton, had spoken to her about him, and had said to her once, "I should particularly like *you* to hear him." And somehow the simple words had impressed themselves upon her. So, when she heard that Mr. Robertson was coming from his church in Liverpool to preach at St. Mary's, she gave up the country visit to hear him.

Beatrice and Bruce Evelin had no scruples in leaving her alone for a couple of days. They knew that she, who had such an exceptional faculty for getting on with all sorts and conditions of men and women, and who always shed sunshine around her, had within her a great love of, sometimes almost a thirst for, solitude.

"I need to be alone now and then," they had heard her say; "it's like drinking water to me."

Sitting quietly by the fire with her delightful edition of Dante, her left hand under her head, her tall figure stretched out in a low chair, Rosamund heard a bell ring below. It called her from the "Paradiso." She sprang up, remembering that she had given the butler no orders about not wishing to be disturbed. At lunch-time the fog had been so dense that she had not thought about possible visitors; she hurried to the head of the staircase.

"Lurby! Lurby! I'm not at——"

It was too late. The butler must have been in the hall. She heard the street door open and a man's voice murmuring something. Then the door shut and she heard steps. She

retreated into the drawing-room, pulling down her brows and shaking her head. No more " Paradiso," and she loved it so ! A moment before she had been far away.

" Regnum coelorum violenza pate
da caldo amore a da viva speranza,
Che vince la divina volontate."

The book was lying open on the arm-chair in which she had been sitting. She went to close it and put it on a table. For an instant she looked down on the page, and immediately her dream returned. Then Lurby's dry, soft voice said behind her :

" Mr. Leith, ma'am."

" Oh ! " She turned, leaving the book.

Directly she looked at Dion Leith she knew why he had come.

" I'm all alone," Rosamund said. " I stayed here, instead of going to Sherrington with Beattie and my guardian, because I wanted to hear a sermon this evening. Come and sit down by the fire."

" What church are you going to ? "

" St. Mary's, Welby Street."

" Shall I go with you ? "

Rosamund had taken up the " Paradiso " and was shutting it.

" I think I'll go alone," she said gently but quite firmly.

" What were you reading ? "

" Dante's ' Paradiso.' "

She put the book down on a table at her elbow.

" I don't believe you meant me to be let in," he said bluntly.

" I didn't know it was you. How could I know ? "

" And if you had known ? "

She hesitated. His brows contracted till he looked almost fierce.

" I'm not sure. Honestly I'm not sure. I've been quite alone since Friday, when they went. And I'd got it into my head that I wasn't going to see anyone till to-morrow, except, of course, at church."

Dion felt chilled almost to the bone.

" I can't understand," he almost burst out, in an uncontrolled way that surprised himself. " Are you completely self-sufficing then ? But it isn't natural. Could you live alone ? "

"I didn't say that."

She looked at him steadily and calmly, without a hint of anger.

"But could you?"

"I don't know. Probably not. I've never tried."

"But you don't hate the idea?"

His voice was almost violent.

"No; if—if I were living in a certain way.

"What way?"

But she did not answer his question.

"I dare say I might dislike living alone. I've never done such a thing, therefore I can't tell."

"You're an enigma," he exclaimed. "And you seem so—so—you have this extraordinary, this abnormal power of attracting people to you. You are friends with everybody."

"Indeed I'm not."

"I mean you're so cordial, so friendly with everybody. Don't you care for anybody?"

"I care very much for some people."

"And yet you could live alone! Shut in here for days with a book"—at that moment he was positively jealous of old Dante, gone to his rest five hundred and seventy-four years ago—"you're perfectly happy."

"The 'Paradiso' isn't an ordinary book," she said, very gently, and looking at him with a kind, almost beaming expression in her yellow-brown eyes.

"I don't believe you ever read an ordinary book."

"I like to feed on fine things. I'm half afraid of the second-rate."

"I love you for that. Oh, Rosamund, I love you for so many things!"

He got up and stood by the fire, turning his back to her for a moment. When he swung round his face was earnest but he looked calmer. She saw that he was making a strong effort to hold himself in, that he was reaching out after self-control.

"I can't tell you all the things I love you for," he said, "but your independence of spirit frightens me. From the very first, from that evening when I saw you in the omnibus at the Milan Station over a year ago, I felt your independence."

"Did I manifest it in the omnibus to poor Beattie and my guardian?" she asked, smiling, and in a lighter tone.

"I don't know," he said gravely. "But when I saw

you the same evening walking with your sister in the public garden I felt it more strongly. Even the way you held your head and moved—you reminded me of the maidens of the Porch on the Acropolis. I connected you with Greece and all my—my dreams of Greece."

"Perhaps if you hadn't just come from Greece——"

"Wasn't it strange?" he said, interrupting her but quite unconscious that he did so, "that almost the first words I heard you speak were about Greece? You were telling your sister about the Greek divers who come to Portofino to find coral under the sea. I was sitting alone in the garden, and you passed and I heard just a few words. They made me think of the first Greek Island I ever saw, rising out of the sunset as I voyaged from Constantinople to the Piræus. It was wonderfully beautiful and wonderfully calm. It was like a herald of all the beauty and purity I found in Greece. It was—like you."

"How you hated Constantinople!" she said. "I remember you denouncing its noise and its dirt, and the mongrel horrors of Pera, to my guardian in the hotel where we made friends. And he put in a plea for Stamboul."

"Yes, I exaggerated. But Constantinople stood to me for all the uproar of life, and Greece for the calm and beauty and happiness, the great Sanity of the true happiness."

He looked at her with yearning in his dark eyes.

"For all I want in my own life," he added.

He paused; then an expression of strong, almost hard resolution made his face look suddenly older.

"You told me at Burstal, on the Chilton Downs, after your début in 'Elijah,' that you would give me an answer soon. I have waited a good while—some weeks——"

"Why did you ask me just that day, after 'Woe unto them'?"

"I felt I must," he answered, but with a slight awkwardness, as if he were evading something and felt half-guilty. "To-day I decided I would ask you again, for the last time."

"You would never——"

"No, never. If you say 'Wait, and come later on and ask me,' I shall not come."

She got up restlessly. She was obviously moved.

"Dion, I can't tell you to-day."

"Why not?"

"I don't know. I just feel I can't. It's no use."

"When did you mean to tell me?"

"I don't know."

"Did you mean ever to allude to the matter again, if I hadn't?"

"Yes, I should have told you, because I knew you were waiting. I—I—often I have thought that I shall never marry anyone."

She looked into the fire. Her face had become almost mysterious.

"Some women don't need—that," she murmured.

The fire played over her pale yellow hair.

"Abnormal women!" he exclaimed violently

She turned.

"Hush! You don't know what you are saying. It isn't abnormal to wish to dedicate——"

She stopped.

"What?" he said.

"Don't let us talk of these things. But you must not judge any woman without knowing what is in her heart. Even your own mother, with whom you have lived alone ever since your father's death—do you know very much of her? We can't always show ourselves plainly as we are. It may not be our fault."

"You will marry. You must marry."

"Why—must?"

He gazed at her. As she met his eyes she reddened slightly, understanding his thought, that such a woman as she was ought not to avoid the great vocation of woman. But there was another vocation, and perhaps it was hers. She felt confused. Two desires were struggling within her. It was as if her nature contained two necessities which were wholly irreconcilable the one with the other.

"You can't tell me?" he said, at last.

"Not now."

"Then I am going, and I shall never ask you again. But I shall never be able to love anyone but you."

He said nothing more, and went away without touching her hand.

"*Da caldo amore a da viva speranza, Che vince la divina volontate.*"

Those words of Dante ran in Rosamund's head, and she repeated them to herself after Dion had gone.

"*La divina volontate!*" She believed in it; she said to herself that she trusted it absolutely. But how was she to know exactly what it was? And yet, could she escape from it even

if she wished to? Could she wander away into any path where the Divine Will did not mean her to set foot? Predestination—free will. "If only I were not so ignorant," she thought.

Soon after six she went up to her bedroom to put on her things for church.

Her bedroom was very simple, and showed plainly an indifference to luxury, a dislike of show and of ostentation in its owner. The walls and ceiling were white. The bed, which stood against the wall in one corner, was exceptionally long. This fact, perhaps, made it look exceptionally narrow. It was quite plain, had a white wooden bedstead, and was covered with a white bedspread of a very ordinary type. There was one arm-chair in the room made of wickerwork with a rather hard cushion on the seat, the sort of cushion that resolutely refuses to "give" when one sits down on it. On the small dressing-table there was no array of glittering silver bottles, boxes and brushes. A straw flagon of eau-de-Cologne was Rosamund's sole possession of perfume. She did not own a box of powder or a puff. But it must be acknowledged that she never looked "shiny." She had some ivory hair-brushes given to her one Christmas by Bruce Evelin. Beside them was placed a hideous receptacle for—well, for anything—pins, perhaps, buttons, small tiresomenesses of that kind. It was made of some glistening black material, and at its centre there bloomed a fearful red cabbage rose, a rose all vulgarity, ostentation and importance. This monstrosity had been given to Rosamund as a thank-offering by a poor charwoman to whom she had been kind. It had been in constant use now for over three years. The charwoman knew this with grateful pride.

Upon the mantelpiece there were other gifts of a similar kind: a photograph frame made of curly shells, a mug with "A present from Greenwich" written across it in gold letters, a flesh-coloured glass vase with yellow trimmings, a china cow with its vermilion ears cocked forward, lying down in a green meadow which just held it, and a toy trombone with a cord and tassels. There were also several photographs of poor people in their Sunday clothes. On the walls hung a photograph of Cardinal Newman, a good copy of a Luini Madonna, two drawings of heads by Burne-Jones, a small painting—signed "G. F. Watts"—of an old tree trunk around which ivy was lovingly growing, and one or two prints.

The floor was polished and partially covered by three

good-sized mats. There was a writing-table on one side of the room with an ebony-and-gold crucifix standing upon it. Opposite to it, on the other side of the room near the fireplace, was a bookcase. On the shelves were volumes of Shakespeare, Dante, Emerson, Wordsworth, Browning, Christina Rossetti, Newman's "Dream of Gerontius" and "Apologia," Thomas à Kempis, several works on mystics and mysticism, a life of St. Catherine of Genoa, another of St. Francis of Assisi, St. Ignatius Loyola's "Spiritual Exercises," Pascal's "Letters," etc. etc. Over the windows hung grey-blue curtains.

Into this room Rosamund came that evening; she went to a wardrobe and began to take down a long sealskin coat. Just then her maid appeared—an Italian girl whom she had taken into her service in Milan when she had studied singing there.

"Shan't I come with you, Signorina?" she asked, as she took the jacket from her mistress and held it for Rosamund to put on.

"No, thank you, Maria. I'm going to church, the Protestant church."

"I could wait outside or come back to fetch you."

"It's not far. I shall be all right."

"But the fog is terrible. It's like a wall about the house."

"Is it as bad as that?"

She went to one of the windows, pulled aside the curtains, lifted the blind and tried to look out. But she could not, for the fog pressed against the window panes and hid the street and the houses opposite."

"It is bad."

She dropped the blind, let the curtains fall into place and turned round.

"But I'd rather go alone. I can't miss the way, and I'm not a nervous person. You'd be far more frightened than I." She smiled at the girl.

Apparently reassured, or perhaps merely glad that her unselfishness was not going to be tested, Maria accompanied her mistress downstairs and let her out. It was Lurby's "evening off," and for once he was not discreetly on hand.

Church bells were chiming faintly in this City of dreadful night as Rosamund almost felt her way onward. She heard them and thought they were sad, and their melancholy seemed to be one with the melancholy of the atmosphere.

Some one passed by her. She just heard a muffled sound of steps, just discerned a shadow—that was all.

To-morrow she must give an answer to Dion Leith. She went on slowly in the fog, thinking, thinking. Two vertical lines showed in her usually smooth forehead.

It was nearly half-past six when she turned into Welby Street. The church was not a large one and there was no parish attached to it. It was a proprietary chapel. The income of the incumbent came from pew rents. His name was Limer, and he was a first-rate preacher of the sensational type, a pulpit dealer in "actualities." He was also an excellent musician, and took great pains with his choir. In consequence of these talents, and of his diligent application of them, St. Mary's was generally full, and all its pews were let at a high figure. To-night, however, because of the fog, Rosamund expected to find few people.

One bell was mournfully ringing as she drew near, and presently saw a faint gleaming of light through long narrow windows of painted glass. "Ping, ping, ping!" It was a thin little summons to prayer. She passed through a gateway in some railings of wrought ironwork, crossed a slippery pavement and entered the church.

It was already more than three parts full, and there was a large proportion of men in the congregation. A smart-looking young man, evidently a gentleman, who was standing close to the door, nodded to Rosamund and whispered:

"I'll put you into Lady Millingham's seat. You'll find Mrs. Chetwinde and Mr. Darlington there."

"Oh, I'd rather——" began Rosamund.

But he had already begun to move up the aisle, and she was obliged to follow him to a pew close to the pulpit, in which were seated a smartly dressed woman with a vague and yet acute expression, pale eyes and a Burne-Jones throat; and a thin, lanky and immensely tall man of uncertain age, with pale brown, very straight hair, large white ears, thick ragged eyebrows, a carefully disarranged beard and moustache, and an irregular refined face decorated with a discreet but kind expression. These were Mrs. Willie Chetwinde, who had a wonderful house in Lowndes Square, and Mr. Esmé Darlington, bachelor, of St. James's Square, who was everybody's friend including his own.

Rosamund just recognized them gravely; then she knelt down and prayed earnestly, with her face hidden against her muff. She still heard the little bell's insistent

"Ping, ping, ping!" She pressed her shut eyes so hard against the muff that rings of yellow light floated up in her darkness, forming, retreating, melting away.

The bell ceased; the first notes of the organ sounded in a voluntary by Mendelssohn, amiable and charming: the choir filed in as Rosamund rose from her knees. In the procession the two last figures were Mr. Limer and Mr.—or, as he was always called in Liverpool, Father—Robertson.

Mr. Limer was a short, squat, clean-shaven but hairy dark man, with coal-black hair sweeping round a big forehead, a determined face and large, indignant brown eyes. The Liverpool clergyman was of middle height, very thin, with snow-white hair, dark eyes and eyebrows, and a young almost boyish face, with straight, small features, and a luminous, gentle and yet intense look. He seemed almost to glow, quietly, definitely, like a lamp set in a dark place, and one felt that his glow could not easily be extinguished. He walked tranquilly by the side of Mr. Limer, and looked absolutely unself-conscious, quietly dignified and simple.

When he went into the pulpit the lights were lowered and a pleasant twilight prevailed. But the preacher's face was strongly illuminated.

Mr. Robertson preached on the sin of egoism, and took as the motto of his sermon the words—"*Ego dormio et cor meum vigilat.*" His method of preaching was quiet, but intense; again the glow of the lamp. Often there were passages which suggested a meditation—a soul communing with itself fearlessly, with an unyielding, but never violent, determination to arrive at the truth. And Rosamund, listening, felt as if nothing could keep this man with the snow-white hair and the young face away from the truth.

He ranged over a wide field—egoism being wide as the world—he exposed many of the larger evils brought about by egoism, in connexion with the Arts, with politics, with charity, with religious work in great cities, with missionary enterprises abroad; he touched on some of the more subtle forms of egoism, which may poison even the sources of love; and finally he discussed the gains and the losses of egoism. "For," he said, "let us be honest and acknowledge that we often gain, in the worldly sense, by our sins, and sometimes lose by our virtues." Power of a kind can be, and very often is, obtained by egoists through their egoism. He discussed that power, showed its value and the glory of it. Then he contrasted with it the power which is only obtained by those

who, completely unselfish, know not how to think of themselves. He enlarged on this theme, on the Kingdom which can belong only to those who are selfless. And then he drew to the end of his sermon.

"One of the best means I know," he said, "for getting rid of egoism is this: whenever you have to take some big decision between two courses of action—perhaps between two life-courses—ask yourself, 'Which can I share?'—which of these two paths is wide enough to admit of my treading it with a companion, whose steps I can help, whose journey I can enliven, whose weariness I can solace, and whose burden I can now and then bear for a little while? And if only one of the paths is wide enough, then choose that in preference to the other. I believe profoundly in 'sharing terms.'"

He paused, gazing at the congregation with his soft and luminous eyes. Then he added:

"*Ego dormio et cor meum vigilat.* When the insistent *I* sleeps, only then perhaps can the heart be truly awake, be really watchful. Then let us send the insistent I to sleep, and let us keep it slumbering."

He half-smiled as he finished. There had been something slightly whimsical about his final words, about his manner and himself when he said them.

Silence and the fog, and Rosamund walking homewards with her hands deep in her muff. All those bodies and minds and souls which had been in the church had evaporated into the night. Mrs. Chetwinde and Esmé Darlington had wanted to speak to Rosamund, but she had slipped out of the church quickly. She did not wish to talk to anyone.

"*Ego dormio et cor meum vigilat.*"

What an odd little turn, or twist, the preacher had given to the meaning of those words! "Whenever you have to take some big decision between two life courses, ask yourself, 'Which can I share?' and if you can only share one, choose that."

Very slowly Rosamund walked on, bending a little above the big muff, like one pulled forward by a weight of heavy thoughts. She turned a corner. Presently she turned another corner and traversed a square, which could not be seen to be a square. And then, quite suddenly, she realized that she had not been thinking about her way home and that she was lost in the impenetrable fog.

She stood still and listened. She heard nothing. Traffic

seemed stopped in this region. On her left were three steps. She went up them and was under the porch of a house. Light shone dully from within, and by it she could just make out on the door the number "8." At least it seemed to her that probably it was an "8." She hesitated, came down the steps, and walked on. It was impossible to see the names of streets and squares. But presently she would come across a policeman. She went on and on, but no policeman bulked shadowy against the background of night and of the fog which at last seemed almost terrible to her.

Rosamund was not timid. She was constitutionally incapable of timidity. Nor was she actively alarmed in a strong and definite way. But gradually there seemed to permeate her a cold, almost numbing sensation of loneliness and of desolation. For the first time in her life she felt not merely alone but solitary, and not merely solitary but as if she were condemned to be so by some power that was hostile to her.

It was a hideous feeling. Something in the fog and in the night made an assault upon her imagination. Abruptly she was numbered among the derelict women whom nobody wants, whom no man thinks of or wishes to be with, whom no child calls mother. She felt physically and morally, "I am solitary," and it was horrible to her. She saw herself old and alone, and she shuddered.

How long she walked on she did not know, but when at last she heard a step shuffling along somewhere in front of her, she had almost—she thought—realized Eternity.

The step was not coming towards her but was going onwards slowly before her. She hastened, and presently came up with an old man, poorly dressed in a dreadful frock-coat and disgraceful trousers, wearing on his long grey locks a desperado of a top hat, and carrying, in a bloated and almost purple hand, a large empty jug.

"Please!" said Rosamund.

The old gentleman shuffled on.

"Could you tell me—*please*—can you tell me where we are?"

She had grasped his left coat-sleeve. He turned and, bending, she peered into the face of a drunkard.

"Close to the 'Daniel Lambert,'" said an almost refined old voice.

And a pair of pathetic grey eyes peered up at her above a nose that was like a conflagration.

"Where's that? What is it?"

"Don't you know the 'Daniel Lambert'?"

The voice sounded very surprised and almost suspicious.

"No."

"It's well known, very well known. I'm just popping round there to get a little something—eh!"

The voice died away.

"I want to find Great Cumberland Place."

"Well, you're pretty close to it. The 'Daniel Lambert's' in the Edgware Road."

"Could you find it?—Great Cumberland Place, I mean?"

"Certainly."

"I wish you would. I should be so grateful."

The grey eyes became more pathetic.

"Grateful to me—would you, miss? I'll go with you and very glad to do it."

The old gentleman took Rosamund home and talked to her on the way. When they parted she asked for his name and address. He hesitated for a moment and then gave it: "Mr. Thrush, 2 Abingdon Buildings John's Court, near Edgware Road."

"Thank you. You've done me a good turn."

At this moment the front door was opened by the housemaid.

"Oh—miss!" she said.

Her eyes left Rosamund and fastened themselves, like weapons, on the old gentleman's nose. He lifted his desperado of a hat and immediately turned away, trying to conceal his jug under his left arm, but inadvertently letting it protrude.

"Good night, and thank you very much indeed!" Rosamund called after him with warm cordiality.

"I'm glad you've got back, miss. We were in a way. It's ever so late."

"I got lost in the fog. That dear old man rescued me."

"I'm very thankful, miss, I'm sure."

The girl seemed stiffened with astonishment. She shut the street door automatically.

"He used to be a chemist once."

"Did he, miss?"

"Yes, quite a successful one too; just off Hanover Square, he told me. He was going round to get something for his supper when we met."

"Indeed, miss?"

Rosamund went upstairs.

"Yes, poor old man," she said, as she ascended.

Like most people in perfect health Rosamund slept well ; but that night she lay awake. She did not want to sleep. She had something to decide, something of vital importance to her. Two courses lay open to her. She might marry Dion Leith, or she might resolve never to marry. Like most girls she had had dreams, but, unlike most girls, she had often dreamed of a life in which men had no place. She had recently entered upon the career of a public singer, not because she was obliged to earn money but because she had a fine voice and a strong temperament, and longed for self-expression. But she had always believed that her public career would be a short one. She loved fine music and enjoyed bringing its message home to people, but she had little or no personal vanity, and the life of a public performer entailed a great deal which she already found herself disliking. Recently, too, her successful career had received a slight check. She had made her festival début at Burstal in "Elijah," and no engagements for oratorio had followed upon it. Some day, while she was still young, she meant to retire, and then——

If she married Dion Leith she would have to give up an old dream. On the other hand, if she married him, perhaps some day she would be a mother. She felt certain—she did not know why—that if she did not marry Dion Leith she would never marry at all.

She thought, she prayed, she thought again. Sometimes in the dark hours of that night the memory of her sensation of loneliness in the fog returned to her. Sometimes Mr. Robertson's "Which can I share ?" echoed within her, in the resonant chamber of her soul. He had been very quiet, but he had made an enormous impression upon her ; he had made her hate egoism much more than she had hated it hitherto.

Even into the innermost sanctuary of religion egoism can perhaps find a way. The thought of that troubled Rosamund in the dark. But when the hour of dawn drew near she fell asleep. She had made up her mind, or, rather, it had surely been made up for her. For a conviction had come upon her that for good or for evil it was meant that her life should be linked with Dion Leith's. He possessed something which she valued highly, and which, she thought, was possessed by very few men. He offered it to her. If she refused it, such an offering would probably never be made to her again.

To be a lonely woman ; to be a subtle and profound egoist ; to be loved, cherished, worshipped ; to be a mother. Many lives of women seemed to float before her eyes.

Just before she lost consciousness it seemed to her, for a moment, that she was looking into the pathetic eyes of the old man whom she had met in the fog.

" Poor old man ! " she murmured.

She slept

On the following morning she sent this note to Dion Leith :

" My dear Dion,—I will marry you.

" Rosamund "

## CHAPTER III

IN the following spring Rosamund and Dion were married, and Dion took Rosamund " to the land of the early morning."

They arrived in Greece at the beginning of May, when the rains were over and the heats of summer were at hand. The bed of the Ilissus was empty. Dust lay white in the streets of Athens and along the road to Phaleron and the sea. The low-lying tracts of country were desert-dry, and about Athens the world was arrayed in a garb of the East. Nevertheless there was still a delicate freshness in the winds that blew to the little city from the purple Ægean or from the mountains of Argolis ; stirring the dust into spiral dances among the pale houses upon which Lycabettos looks down ; shaking the tiny leaves of the tressy pepper trees near the Royal Palace ; whispering the antique secrets of the ages into the ears of the maidens who, unwearied and happily submissive, bear up the Porch of the Erechtheion ; stealing across the vast spaces and between the mighty columns of the Parthenon. The dawns and the twilights had not lost the pure savour of their almost frail vitality. The deepness of slumber still came with the nights.

Greece was, perhaps, at her loveliest. And Greece was almost deserted by travellers. They had come and gone with the spring, leaving the land to its own, and to those two who had come there to drink deep at the wells of happiness. And, a little selfish as lovers are, Rosamund and Dion took everything wonderful and beautiful as their possession.

The yellow-green pines near the convent of Daphni threw patches of shade on the warm earth because they wanted to rest there; the kingfisher rose in low and arrow-like flight from the banks of Kephissus to make a sweet diversion for them; they longed for brilliance, and the lagoons of Salamis were dyed with a wonder of emerald; they asked for twilight, and the deep and deserted glades of Academe gave it them in full measure. All these possessions, and many others, they enjoyed almost as children enjoy a meadow full of flowers when they have climbed over the gate that bars it from the high road. But the Acropolis was the stronghold of their joy. Only when their feet pressed its silvery grasses, and trod its warm marble pavements, did they hold the world within their grasp.

For some days after their arrival in Greece they almost lived among the ruins. The long-coated guardians smiled at them, at first with a sort of faint amusement, at last with a friendly pleasure. And they smiled at themselves. Each evening they said, "To-morrow we will do this—or that," and each morning they said nothing, just looked at each other after breakfast, read in each other's eyes the repetition of desire, and set out on the dear dusty road with which they were already so familiar.

Had there ever before been a honeymoon bounded by the precipices of the Acropolis? They sometimes discussed that important question, and always decided against the impertinent possibility. "What we are doing has never been done before." Dion went further than this, to "What I am feeling has never been felt before." His youth asserted itself in silent, determined statements which seemed to him to ring with authentic truth.

It was a far cry from the downs of Chilton to the summit of the Acropolis. Dion remembered the crowd assembled to hear "Elijah"; he felt the ugly heat, the press of humanity. And all that was but the prelude to this! Even the voice crying "Woe unto them!" had been the prelude to the wonderful silence of Greece. He felt marvellously changed. And Rosamund often seemed to him changed, too, because she was his own. That wonderful fact gave her new values, spread about her new mysteries. And some of these mysteries Dion did not attempt to fathom at first. Perhaps he felt that some silences of love are like certain ceremony with a friend—a mark of the delicacy which is the sign-manual of the things that endure. In the

beginning of that honeymoon there was a beautiful restraint which was surely of good augury for the future. Not all the doors were set violently open, not all the rooms were ruthlessly visited.

Dion found that he was able to reverence the woman who had given herself to him more after he had received the gift than before. And this was very wonderful to him, was even, somehow, perplexing. For Rosamund had the royal way of bestowing. She was capable of refusal, but not of half-measures or of niggardliness. There was something primitive in her which spoke truth with a voice that was fearless; and yet that very primitiveness seemed closely allied with her purity. Dion only understood what that purity was when he was married to her. It was like the radiant atmosphere of Greece to him. Had not Greece led him to it, made him desire it with all that was best in his nature? Now he had brought it to Greece. Actually, day after day, he trod the Acropolis with Rosamund.

Greece had already, he believed, put out a hand and drawn them more closely together.

'Love me, love the land I love."

Laughingly, yet half-anxiously too, Dion had said that to Rosamund when they left Brindisi and set sail for Greece. With her usual sincerity she had answered:

"I want to love it. Do you wish me to say more than that, to make promises I may not be able to keep?"

"No," he had answered. "I only want truth from you." And after a moment he had added, "I shall never want anything from you but your truth."

She had looked at him rather strangely, like one moved by conflicting feelings, and after a slight hesitation she had said:

"Dion do you realize all the meaning in those words of yours?"

"Of course I do."

"Then if you really mean them you must be one of the most daring of human beings. But I shall try a compromise with you. I shall try to give you my best truth, never my worst. You deserve that, I think. Indeed, I know you do."

And he had left it to her. Was he not wise to do that? Already he trusted her absolutely, as he had never thought to trust anyone.

"I could face any storm with you," he once said to Rosamund.

Rosamund had wanted to love Greece, and from the first moment of seeing the land she had loved it.

In the beginning of their stay she had scarcely been able to believe that she was really in Athens. A great name had roused in her imagination a conception of a great city. The soft familiarity, the almost rustic simplicity and intimacy, the absolutely unpretentious brightness and homely cheerfulness of the small capital of this unique land had surprised, had almost confused her.

"Is this really Athens?" she had said, wondering, as they had driven into what seemed a village set in bright bareness, sparsely shaded here and there by small pepper-trees.

And the question had persisted in her mind, had almost trembled upon her lips, for two or three days. But then had come a mysterious change, brought about, perhaps, by affection. Quickly she had learnt to love Athens, and then she had the feeling that if it had been in any way different from what it was she could not have loved it. Its very smallness delighted her, and she would not permit its faults to be mentioned in her presence. Once, when Dion said that it was a great pity the Athenians did not plant more trees, and a greater pity they so often lopped off branches from the few trees they had, she exclaimed:

"You mustn't run down my Athens. It likes to give itself to the sun generously. It's grateful, as it well may be, for all the sun has done for it. Look at the colour of that marble."

And Dion looked at the honey colour, and the wonderful reddish-gold, and, laughing, said:

"Athens is the one faultless city, and the dogs tell us so every night and all night long."

"Dogs always bark when the moon is up," she answered, with a semi-humorous gravity.

"As they bark in Athens?" he queried.

"Yes, of course."

"If I am ever criticized," he asked, "will you be my defender?"

"I shan't hear you criticized."

"How do you know that?"

"I do know it," she said, looking at him with her honest brown eyes; "nobody will criticize you when I am there."

He caught hold of her hand.

"And you? Don't you often criticize me silently? I'm sure you do. Why did you marry me, Rosamund?"

They were sitting on the Acropolis when he put that question. It was a shining day. The far-off seas gleamed. There was a golden pathway to Ægina. The brilliant clearness, not European but Eastern, did not make the great view, spread out beneath and around them hard. Greece lay wrapped in a mystery of sunlight, different from, yet scarcely less magical than, the mystery of shadows and the moon. Rosamund looked out on the glory. She had taken off her hat, and given her yellow hair to the sunlight. Without any head-covering she always looked more beautiful, and, to Dion, more Greek than when her hair was concealed. He saw in her then more clearly than at other times the woman of all the ages rather than the woman of an epoch subject to certain fashions. As he looked at her now, resting on a block of warm marble above the precipice which is dominated by the little temple of Athena Nike, he wondered, with the concealed humility of the great lover, how it was that she had ever chosen to give herself to him. He had sworn to marry her. He had not been weak in his wooing, had not been one of those men who will linger on indefinitely at a woman's feet, ready to submit to unnumbered refusals. But now there rose up in the depths of him the cry, "What am I?" and the answer, "Only a man like thousands of other men, in no way remarkable, in no way more worthy than thousands of others of the gift of a great happiness."

Rosamund turned from the shining view. There was in her eyes an unusual vagueness.

"Why did you?"

"Why did I marry you, Dion?"

"Yes. When I found you with your 'Paradiso' I don't think you meant ever to marry me."

"I always liked you. But at first I didn't think of you in that way."

"But you had known for ages before Burstal——"

"Yes, of course. I knew the day I sang at Mr. Darlington's, at that party he gave to introduce me as a singer. I knew first from your mother. She told me."

"My mother?"

"By the look she gave me when you introduced me to her."

"Was it an——How d'you mean?"

"I can scarcely explain. But it was a look that asked a great many questions. And they wouldn't have been asked if you hadn't cared for me, and if she hadn't known it."

"What did you think when you knew?"

"That it was kind of you to care for me."

"Kind?"

"Yes. I always feel that about people who like me very much."

"And did you just go on thinking me kind until that day at Burstal?"

"I suppose so. But I felt very much at home with you."

"I don't know whether that's a compliment to a man who's still young, or not?"

"Nor do I. But that's just how it was."

He said nothing for a little while. When he spoke again it was with some hesitation, and his manner was almost diffident.

"Rosamund, that day at Burstal, were you at all inclined to accept me?"

"Yes; I think, perhaps, I was. Why?"

"Sometimes I have fancied there was a moment when——"

He looked at her and then, for once, his eyes fell before hers almost guiltily. They sat in silence for a moment. Behind them, on a bench set in the shadow of a mighty wall, was a guardian of the Acropolis, a thin brown man with very large ears sticking out from his head. He had been dozing, but now stirred, shuffled his feet, and suddenly cleared his throat. Then he sighed heavily.

"And if there was, why did you think it came, Dion?" said Rosamund suddenly, with an almost startling swiftness and decision.

Dion reddened.

"Why don't you like to tell me?"

"Oh, well—things go through the mind without our wishing them to. You must know that, Rosamund. They are often like absurd little intruders. One kicks them out if one can."

"What kind of intruder did you kick out, or try to kick out, at Burstal?"

She spoke half-laughingly, but half-challengingly.

He drew a little nearer to her.

"Sometimes I have fancied that perhaps, that day at Burstal, you suddenly realized that love might be a more powerful upholder of life than ambition ever could be."

"Sometimes? And you thought it first on the downs, or at any rate after the concert?"

"I think I did."

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"Do you realize," she said slowly, and as if with an effort, "that you and I have never discussed my singing in 'Elijah'?"

"I know we never have."

"Let us do it now," she continued, still seeming to make a strong effort.

"But why should we?"

"I want to. Didn't I sing well?"

"I thought you sang wonderfully well."

"Then what was it that went wrong? I've never understood."

"Why should you think anything went wrong? The critics said it was a remarkable performance. You made a great effect."

"I believe I did. But I felt for the first time that day that I was out of sympathy with my audience. And then"—she paused, but presently added with a certain dryness—"I was never offered any engagement to sing in oratorio after Burstal."

"I believe a good many people thought your talent would show at its best in opera."

"I shall never go on the stage. The idea is hateful to me, and always has been. Would you like me to sing on the stage?"

"No."

"Dion, why don't you tell me what happened that day at Burstal?"

"I scarcely could."

"I wish you would try."

"Well—I think it was a mistake for you to begin your public career in oratorio by singing 'Woe unto them.'"

"Why?"

"It's an unsympathetic thing. It's a cruel sort of thing."

"Cruel? But it's one of the best-known things in oratorio."

"You made it quite new."

"How?"

"It sounded fanatical when you sang it. I never heard it sound like that before."

"Fanatical?" she said, and her voice was rather cold.

"Rosamund," he said, quickly and anxiously, "you asked me to tell you exactly what I meant, what I felt, that is——"

"Yes, I know. Go on, Dion Well? It sounded fanatical——"

"To me. I'm only telling you my impression. When I've heard 'Woe unto them' before it has always sounded sad, piteous if you like, a sort of wailing. When you sang it, somehow it was like a curse, a tremendous summoning of vengeance."

"Why not? Are not the words 'Destruction shall fall upon them'?"

"I know. But you made it sound—to me, I mean—almost as if you were rejoicing personally at the thought of the destruction, as if you were longing almost eagerly for it to overwhelm the faithless."

"I see. That is what you meant by fanatical?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

After a long pause she said:

"Nobody has told me that till now."

"Perhaps others didn't feel it as I did."

"I don't know. What does one know about other people? Not even my guardian said anything. I never could understand——"

She broke off, then continued steadily:

"So you think I repelled people that day?"

"It seems impossible that you——"

But she interrupted him.

"No, Dion, it isn't at all impossible. I think if we are absolutely sincere we repel people very often."

"But you are the most sincere person I have ever seen, and you must know how beloved you are, how popular you are wherever you go."

"When I'm being sincere with the part of me that's feeling kind or affectionate. Let us go to the Parthenon."

She got up, opened her white sun-umbrella and turned round, keeping her hat in her left hand. As she stood there in that setting of marble, with the sun caught in her hair, and the mighty view below and beyond her, she looked wonderfully beautiful, Dion thought, but almost stern. He feared perhaps he had hurt her. But was it his fault? She had told him to speak.

Rosamund did not return to the subject of her début at Burstal, but in the late afternoon of that day she spoke of her singing, and of the place it might have in their married life. Dion believed she did this because of their conversation near the Temple of Nike.

They had spent most of the day on the Acropolis. Both had brought books: she, Mahaffy's "History of Greek Literature"; he, a volume of poems written by a young diplomat who loved Greece and knew her well. Neither of them had read many pages, but as the strong radiance began to soften about them on the height, and the breeze from the Saronic Gulf came to them with a more feathery warmth and freshness over the smiling bareness of the Attic Plain, Dion, who had been half-dreamily turning the leaves of his little book, said:

"Rosamund."

"Yes?"

"Look at the sea and the mountains of Trigania, those far-off mountains"—he pointed—"and the outpost of Hydra."

She looked and said nothing. Then he read to her these lines of the young diplomat-poet:

"A crescent sail upon the sea,
So calm and fair and ripple free
You wonder storms can ever be;

A shore with deep indented bays,
And o'er the gleaming water-ways
A glimpse of Islands in the haze;

A face bronzed dark to red and gold,
With mountain eyes that seem to hold
The freshness of the world of old;

A shepherd's crook, a coat of fleece,
A grazing flock;—the sense of peace,
The long sweet silence,—this is Greece!"

Rosamund gazed before her at Greece in the evening light.

"'The freshness of the world of old,'" she repeated, and her voice had a thrill in it. "'The sense of peace, the long sweet silence,—this is Greece.' If there was music with the music of those words I should love to sing them."

"And how you could sing them! Like no other."

"At any rate my heart would be in them. 'The freshness of the world of old—the sense of peace, the long sweet silence.'"

She was standing now near the edge of the sacred rock, looking out over the tawny plain flanked by grey Hymettos, and away to the sea. There were no voices rising from below.

There was no sound of traffic on the white dusty road which wound away down the slope to the hidden city. Her contralto voice lingered on the words; her lips drew them out softly, lengthening the sounds they loved.

"Freshness, that which belonged to the early world, long sweet silence, peace. Oh, Dion, if you knew how something in me cares for freshness and for peace!"

Her glad energies were strangely stilled; yet there was a kind of force in her stillness, the force that is in all deep truths of whatever nature they may be. He felt that he was near to perhaps the most essential part of her, to that which was perhaps more truly her than even the radiant and buoyant humanity by means of which she drew people to her.

"Could you live always out of the world?" he asked her.

"But it wouldn't be out of the world."

"Away from people—with me?"

"With you?"

She looked at him for a moment almost as if startled. Then there came into her brown eyes a scrutiny that seemed half-inward, as if it were partially applied to herself.

"It's difficult to be certain what one could do. I suppose one has several sides."

"Ah! And your singing side?"

"I want to speak about that."

Her voice was suddenly more practical, and her whole look and manner changed, losing in romance and strangeness, gaining in directness and energy.

"We've never discussed it."

She sat down on a slab of rock at the edge of the precipice, and went on:

"You don't mind your wife being a public singer, do you, Dion?"

"Suppose I do?"

"Do you?"

"You're so energetic I doubt if you could be happy in idleness."

"I couldn't in England."

"And in Greece? But we are only here for such a short time."

He took her hand in his.

"Learning the lessons of happiness."

"Good lessons for us!" she said, smiling.

"The best there are. I believe in the education of joy.

It opens the heart, calls up all the generous things. But your singing; can I bear your travelling about perpetually all over England?"

"If I get engagements."

'You will. You had a good many for concerts last winter. You've got several for June and July. You'll get many more. But who's to go with you on your travels?"

"Beattie, of course. Why do you look at me like that?"

"How do we know Beatrice won't marry?"

Rosamund looked grave.

"Why shouldn't she?" asked Dion.

"She may, of course."

"D'you think she'll remain your apanage now?" he asked, with a hint of smiling sarcasm that could not hurt her.

"My apanage?"

"Hasn't she been something like that?"

"Perhaps she has. But Beattie always sinks herself in others. She wouldn't be happy if she didn't do that. Of course, your friend Guy Daventry's in love with Beattie."

"Deeply."

"But I'm not at all sure that Beattie——"

She paused abruptly. After a moment she continued:

"You asked me to-day why I married you. I didn't answer you, and I'm not going to answer you now—entirely. But you're not like other men, most other men."

"In what way?"

"A way that means very much to me," she answered, with a delicious purity and directness. "Women feel such things very soon when they know men. I could easily have never married, but I could never, never have married a man who had lived as I believe most men have lived."

"I think I always knew that from the first moment I saw you."

"Did you? I'm glad. I care tremendously for *that* in you, Dion—more than you will ever know."

"That's my great, too great reward," he said soberly, almost with a touch of deep awe. Then, reddening and looking away, he added, "You were the very first."

"Was I?"

"Yes, but—but you mustn't think that it was religious feeling, anything of that kind, which kept me back from—from certain things. It was more the desire to be strong, healthy, to have the sane mind in the sane body, I think. I was mad about athletics, all that sort of thing. Anyhow, you

know now. You were the first. You will be the only one in my life."

There was a long silence between them. Then Rosamund said, with a change of manner to practical briskness :

" If Beattie ever should marry, I could take a maid about with me."

" Yes. An hotel in Liverpool with a maid ! In Blackpool, in Huddersfield, in Wolverhampton, in Glasgow, when there's a heavy thaw on, with a maid ! Oh, how delightful it will be ! Manchester on a wet day in early spring with a——"

" Hush ! " she put one hand on his lips gently, and looked at him with a sort of smiling challenge in her eyes. " Do you mean to forbid me ? "

" I don't think I could ever forbid you to do anything."

" We shall see in England."

" But, Rosamund "—there was no one in sight, and he slipped one arm round her—" if something came to fill your life, both our lives, to the brim ? "

" Ah, then,"—a very remote expression came into her eyes,—" then it would all be different."

" All ? "

" Yes. Everything would be quite different then."

" Not our relation to each other ? "

" Yes, even that. Perhaps that most of all."

" I—I hardly like to hear you say that," he said, struggling against a perhaps stupid, or even hateful, feeling of depression mingled with something else."

" But wouldn't it ? Think ! "

" I don't want that to change. I should hate any change in that."

" What we want, and what we hate, doesn't affect what has to be. And I expect at the end we shall be thankful for that. But, Dion, yes, *if* what you say, I could give it all up. Public singing ! What would it matter then ? I'm a woman, not a singer. But perhaps it will never come."

" Who knows ? " he said.

And he sighed.

She turned towards him, leaned one hand on the stone and looked at him almost anxiously.

" What is the matter, Dion ? "

" Why ? There is nothing the matter."

" Would you rather we never had that in our lives ? "

" A child ? "

" Yes, a child."

"I thought I longed for that," he answered.

"Do you mean that you have changed and don't long any more?"

"I suppose it's like this. When a man's very happy, perfectly happy, he doesn't—perhaps he can't—want any change to come. If you're perfectly happy instinctively you almost fear any change. Till to-day, till this very minute perhaps, I thought I wanted to have a child—some day. Perhaps I still do really, or perhaps I shall. But—you must forgive me, I can't help it!—this evening, sitting here, I don't want anything to come between us. It seems to me that even a child of ours would take some of you away from me. Don't you see that?"

She shook her head.

"That's a man's feeling. I can't share it."

"But think—all the attention you would have to give to a child, all the thoughts you would fasten on it, all the anxieties you'd have about it!"

"Well?"

"One only has a certain amount of time. You'd have to take away a good deal, a great deal, of the time you can now give to me. Oh, it sounds too beastly, I know! Perhaps I scarcely mean it! But surely you can see how a man who loves a woman very much might, without being the least bit unnatural, think, 'I'd like to keep every bit of her for myself. I'd like to have her all to myself!' I dare say this feeling will pass. Remember, Rose, we're only just married, and we're in Greece, right away from every one. Don't think me morbidly jealous, or a beast. I'm not. I expect lots of men have felt as I do, perhaps even till the first child came."

"Ah, then it would be all right," she said. "The natural things, the things nature intends, are always all right."

"How blessedly sane and central you are!"

"If we had a child—Dion, you must believe me!—we should be drawn ever so much nearer together by it. If we ever do have one, we shall look back on this time—you will—and think 'We were much farther apart then than we are now.'"

"I don't like to hear you say that," he said gravely, almost with pain.

Could a woman like Rosamund be driven by an instinct blindly? She was such a perfect type of womanhood. It would be almost a tragedy if she—such a woman—died

childless. Perhaps instinct had obscurely warned her of that, had taught her where to look for a mate. He, Dion, had always lived purely. That day she had acknowledged that she had divined it. Was that, perhaps, her real, her instinctive reason for marrying him? But a man wants to be married for one thing only, because the woman longs for him. And Dion was just an ordinary man with very strong feelings.

"Let's take one more stroll before we go down," he said.

"Yes, to the maidens," she answered.

Her voice sounded relieved. She pushed her arm gently through his as they moved away, and he felt all his body thrill. The mystery of love was almost painful to him at that moment. He realized that a great love might grow to have an affinity with a disease. "I must be careful. I must take great care with this love of mine," he thought.

They went slowly over the slabs of marble and the grey rocks and passed before the west front of the Parthenon. Dion felt slight resistance in Rosamund's arm, and stopped. In the changing light the marble was full of warm colour, was in places mysterious and translucent almost as amber. The immense power, the gigantic calm of the temple, a sort of still breathing of Eternity upon Time, confronted a glory which was beginning to change in the face of its changelessness. Soon the seas that held their dream under the precipices of Sunion, and along the shores of Ægina, where the tall shepherd boys in their fleeces of white lead home the flocks in the twilight, would lose the wonder of their shining, and the skies the rapture of their diffused light. In the quietly austere Attic Plain, through the whispering groves of Academe, and along the sacred way to Eleusis, a very delicate vagueness was beginning to travel, like a wanderer setting forth to greet the coming of the night. The ranges of hills and mountains, Hymettos and Pentelicus, Parnes stretching to the far distance, Mount Corydallus, the peak of Salamis, the exquisitely long mountains of Trigania—"the greyhounds of their tribe," Rosamund loved to call them—were changing almost from moment to moment, becoming a little softer, a little more tender, putting off their distinct hues of the day for the colours of sleep and forgetting. But the great Doric columns fronting them, the core of the heart of this evening splendour, seemed not to defy, but to ignore, all the processes of change. In its ruin the Parthenon seemed to say, "I have not changed." And it was true. For the same soul which had confronted

Pericles confronted the two lovers who now stood at the foot of the temple.

"I wonder how many thousands of people of all nations have learnt the same lesson here," Rosamund said at last.

"The Doric lesson, you mean?"

"Yes, of strength, simplicity, endurance, calmness."

"And I wonder how many thousands have forgotten the lesson."

"Why do you say that, Dion?"

"I don't know. Great art is a moral teacher, I'm sure of that. But men are very light-minded as a rule, I think. If they lived before these columns they might learn a great deal, they might even develop in a splendid direction, I believe. But an hour, even a few hours, is that enough? Impressions fade very quickly in most people."

"Not in you. You never forgot the Parthenon, and I shall never forget it."

She stood for some minutes quite still gazing steadily up at the temple, gaining—it seemed to her—her own stillness from its tremendous immobility.

"The greatest strength is in silence," she thought. "The greatest power is in motionlessness."

She thought of the raging of the great sea. But no! There was more of the essence of strength, of the stern inwardness of power, in that which confronted life and Time in absolute stillness: in a mountain, in this temple. And the temple spoke to something far down within her; to something which desired long silences and deep retirement, to something mystic which was sometimes like a creeping hunger within her, and which she did not understand. The temple was Pagan and she knew that. But that in her to which it spoke was not Pagan. Before she left Athens she learnt to realize that the soul of man, when it speaks through mighty and pure effort, of whatever kind, always speaks to the same Listener, to but one, though man may not know it.

"Doric!" she said at last. "I have always known that for me that would be the greatest. The simplest thing is the most sublime thing. That temple is like the Sermon on the Mount to me. Didn't you bring me here because it meant so much to you?"

"Not entirely. No, Rosamund, I think I brought you here because I felt that you belonged here."

"This satisfies me."

She sighed deeply, still gazing at the temple.

"You aren't only in Greece, you are of Greece. Come to the maidens."

As they went on slowly the acid voices of the little birds which fly perpetually among the columns of the Parthenon followed them, bidding them good night.

They descended over the uneven ground and came to the famous Porch of the Caryatides, jutting out from the little Ionic temple which is the handmaid of the Parthenon. Not far from the Porch, and immediately before it, was a wooden bench. Already Rosamund and Dion had spent many hours here, sometimes sitting on the bench, more often resting on the warm ground in the sunshine, among the fragments of ruin and the speary, silver-green grasses. Now Rosamund sat down and Dion stood by her side.

"Rosamund, those maidens are my ideal of womanhood shown in marble," he said.

"They are almost miraculously beautiful. And one scarcely knows why. But I know that every time I see them the mystery of their beauty seems more ineffable to me, and the meaning of it seems more profound. How did men get so much meaning into marble?"

"By caring so much for what is beautiful in womanhood, I suppose."

He sat down close beside her.

"I sometimes wonder whether women have any idea what some men, many men, I believe, seek in women."

"What do they seek?"

"What do those maidens that hold up the Porch suggest to you?"

"All that's calm without a touch of coldness, and strong without a touch of hardness, and noble without a touch of pride, and obedient without a touch of servility."

"Brave sweetness, too, and protectiveness. They are wonderful, and so are some women. When I saw you in the omnibus at Milan I thought of these maidens immediately."

"How strange!"

"Why strange?"

"Isn't it?" she said, gazing at the six maidens in their flowing draperies of marble, who, upon their uncovered heads, bore tranquilly up the marble architrave. "How wonderfully simple and unpretending they are!"

"Are not you?"

"I don't know. I don't believe I think about it."

"I do. Rosamund, sometimes I feel that I am an unique

man—just think of a fellow in a firm on the Stock Exchange being unique!—because I have had an ideal, and I have attained to it. When I was here alone, I conceived for the first time an ideal of woman. I said to myself, 'In the days of ancient Greece there must have been such women in the flesh as these maidens in marble. If I could have lived and loved then!' And I came away from Greece carrying a sort of romantic dream with me. And now I sit here with you; I can't think why I, a quite ordinary man, should be picked out for perfect happiness."

"Is it really perfect?" she asked, turning to him.

"I think so. In such a place with you!"

As the evening drew on, a little wind came and went over the rocky height, but it had no breath of cold in it. Two Greek soldiers passed by slowly behind them—short young men with skins almost as dark as the skins of Arabs of the South, black eyes and faces full of active mentality. They were talking eagerly, but stopped for a moment to look at the English, and beyond them at the six maidens on their platform of marble. Then they went on, talking again, but presently hesitated, came back, and stood not far off, gazing at the Porch with a mixture of reverence and quiet wistfulness. Dion drew Rosamund's attention to them.

"They feel the beauty," he said.

"Yes. I like that."

She looked at the two young men with a smile. One of them noticed it, and smiled back at her almost boyishly, and with a sort of confidential simplicity.

The light began to fail. The six maidens were less clearly seen, but the deep meaning of them did not lessen. In the gathering darkness they and their sweet effort became more touching, more lovable. Their persistence was exquisite now that they confronted with serenity the night.

"They are beautiful by day, but at night they are adorable," said Rosamund.

"Don't you know why I thought of them when I met you?" he whispered.

She got up slowly. The Greek soldiers moved, turned, and went down the slope towards the Propylea. Their quick voices were heard again. Then there was the sound of a bell.

"Time to go," said Rosamund.

As they followed the soldiers she again put her arm through her young husband's.

"Dion," she said, "I think I'm a little afraid of your

ideals. I understand them. I have ideals too. But I think perhaps mine are less in danger of ever being shattered than yours are."

"Why? But I know mine are not in danger."

"How can you say that?"

"It's no use trying to frighten me. But what about your ideals? What is the nature of the difference between yours and mine, which makes yours so much less vulnerable than mine?"

But she only said:

"I don't believe I could explain it. But I feel it, and I shall go on feeling it."

They went down the steep marble steps, gave the guardian at the foot of them good night, and walked almost in silence to Athens.

## CHAPTER IV

AFTER that day Rosamund and Dion often talked of the child who might eventually come into their lives to change them. Rosamund indeed, now that such a possibility had been discussed between them, returned to it with an eagerness which she did not seek to conceal. She was wonderfully frank, and her frankness seemed to belong naturally to her transparent purity, to be an essential part of it. Dion's momentary depression that evening on the Acropolis had evidently stirred something in her which would not let her rest until it had expressed itself. She had detected for the first time in her husband a hint of something connected with his love for her which seemed to her morbid. She could not forget it and she was resolved to destroy it if possible. When they next stood together on their beloved height she said to him:

"Dion, don't you hate anything morbid?"

"Yes, loathe it!" he answered, with hearty conviction. "But surely you know that. Why d'you ask me such a thing? How dare you?"

And he turned to her his brown face, bright this morning with good spirits, his dark eyes sparkling with hopefulness and energy.

It was a pale morning, such as often comes to Athens even at the edge of the summer. They were standing on the little terrace near to the Acropolis Museum, looking down over the city and to helmet-shaped Lycabettos. The wind, too fond of the Attic Plain, was blowing, not wildly, but with sufficient force to send the dust whirling in light clouds over the pale houses and the little Byzantine churches. Long and narrow rivulets of dust marked the positions of the few roads which stretched out along the plain. The darkness of the groves which sheltered the course of the Kephissus contrasted strongly with the flying pallors and seemed at enmity with them. The sky was milky white and grey, broken up in places by clouds of fantastic shapes, along the ruffled edges of which ran thin gleams of sunshine like things half timorous and ashamed. Upon the flat shores near Phaleron the purple seas broke in spray, and the salty drops were caught up by the wind and mingled with the hurrying grains of dust. It was not exactly a sad day, but there was an uneasiness abroad. The delicate calm of Greece was disturbed. Nevertheless Dion was feeling gay and light-hearted, inclined to enjoy everything the world about him offered to him. Even the restlessness beneath and around them accorded with his springing spirits. The whirling spirals of dust suggested to him the gaiety of a dance. The voice of the wind was a joyous music in his ears.

"How dare you?" he repeated, with a happy pretence of indignation.

"Because I think you were almost morbid yesterday."

"I? When?"

"When we spoke of the possibility of our some day having a child."

"I had a moment of thinking that too," he agreed. "Yes, Rose, the thought went through my mind that a great love, such as mine for you, might become almost a disease if one didn't watch it, hold it in."

"If it ever did become like that, do you know what would happen?"

"What, Rose?"

"Instead of rejoicing in it I should shrink from it."

"That's enough for me!"

He spoke gaily, confidently.

"Besides, I don't really believe I'm a man to love like that. I only imagined I might for a moment, perhaps, because it was twilight. Imaginings come with the twilight."

"I could never bear to think, if a child came, that you didn't want it, that you wished it out of the way."

"I never should. But I expect lots of young married people have queer thoughts and feelings which they keep entirely to themselves—I blurted mine out. You've got a dangerously sincere husband, Rose. The whole matter lies in your own hands. If we ever have a child, love it, but don't love it more than me."

"I should love it so differently! How could maternal love interfere with the love of woman for man?"

"No, I don't suppose it could."

"Of course it never could."

"Then that's settled. Where shall we go to get out of the wind? It seems to be rising."

After searching for a place of shelter in vain they eventually took refuge in the Parthenon, under the shadow of the great western wall. Perhaps in consequence of the wind the Acropolis was entirely deserted. Only the guardians were hidden somewhere, behind columns, in the Porch of the Museum, under the roof of their little dwelling at the foot of the marble staircase which leads up to the Propylea. The huge wall of the Parthenon kept off the wind from the sea, and as Rosamund and Dion no longer saw the whirling dust clouds in the plain they had, for the moment, almost an illusion of peace. They sat down on the guardian's bench, just underneath some faint fragments of paintings which dated from the time when the temple was made use of as a church by Greek Christians; and immediately Rosamund went on talking about the child. She spoke very quietly and earnestly, with the greatest simplicity, and by degrees Dion came to see her as a mother, to feel that perhaps only as a mother could she fulfil herself. The whole of her beauty would never be revealed unless she were seen with a child of her own. Hitherto he had thought of her chiefly in relation to himself, as the girl he longed to win, then as the girl he most wonderfully had succeeded in winning. She put herself before him now in a different light, and he saw in her new and beautiful possibilities. While she was talking his imagination began to play about the child, and presently he realized that he was thinking of it as a boy. Then, in a moment, he realized that on the previous evening he had thought of a male, not of a female child. With this in his mind he said abruptly:

"What sort of a child do you wish to have, Rosamund?"

"What sort?" she said, looking at him with surprise in her brown eyes.

"Yes."

"What do you mean? A beautiful, strong, healthy child, of course, the sort of child every married woman longs to have, and imagines having till it comes."

"Beautiful, strong, healthy!" he repeated, returning her look. "Of course it could only be that—your child. But I meant, do you want it to be a boy or a girl?"

"Oh!"

She paused, and looked away from him and down at the uncemented marble blocks which form the pavement of the Parthenon.

"Well?" he said, as she kept silence.

"If it were to be a girl I should love it."

"You wish it to be a girl?"

"I didn't say that. The fact is, Dion"—and now she again looked at him, "I have always thought of our child as a boy. That's why your question almost startled me. I have never even once thought of having a girl. I don't know why."

"I think I do."

"Why then?"

"The thought was born of the desire. You wanted our child to be a son and so you thought of it as a son."

"Perhaps that was it."

"Wasn't it?"

He spoke with a certain pressure. She remained silent for a moment, and two little vertical lines appeared in her forehead. Then she said:

"Yes, I believe it was. And you?"

"I confess that when yesterday we spoke of a child I was thinking all the time about a boy."

She gazed at him with something visionary in her eyes, which made them look for a moment like the eyes of a woman whom he had not seen till now. Then she said quietly:

"It will be a boy, I think. Indeed, if it weren't perhaps absurd, I should say that I know it will be a boy."

He said nothing more just then, but at that moment he felt as if he, too, knew, not merely hoped, or guessed, something about their joint future, knew in the depths of him that a boy-child would some day be sent to Rosamund and to him, to influence and to change their lives.

The wind began to fail almost suddenly, the sky grew brighter, a shaft of sun lay on the marble at their feet.

"It's going to be fine," Dion said. "Let's be active for once. The wind has made me restless. Suppose we get a couple of horses and ride out to the convent of Daphni!"

She got up at once.

"Yes. I've brought my habit, and haven't had it on once."

As they left the Great Temple she looked up at the mighty columns and said:

"Doric! If we have a boy let us bring him up to be Doric."

"Yes, Rosamund," he said, quietly and strongly. "We will."

Afterward he believed that it was then, and only then, that he caught something of her deep longing to have a child. He began to see how a man's child might influence him and affect his life, might even send him upwards by innocently looking up to him. It would be bad, very bad, to fail as a husband, but, by Jove! it would be one of the great tragedies to fail as a father. Mentally Dion measured the respective heights of himself and a very small boy; saw the small boy's trusting eyes looking, almost peering, up at him. Such eyes could change, could become very attentive. "It wouldn't do to be adversely criticized by your boy," he thought. And one day he said to Rosamund, but in almost a casual way:

"If we ever do have a boy, Rose, and want him to be Doric, we shall have to start in by being Doric ourselves, eh?"

"Yes," she answered, "I've thought that, too."

"D'you think I could ever learn to be that?"

"I know you could. You are on the way already, I think. I noticed in London that you were never influenced by all the affectations and absurdities, or worse, that seem to have taken hold of so many people lately."

"There has been a wave of something rather beastly passing over London certainly. But I almost wonder you knew it."

"Why?"

"Can your eyes see anything that isn't good?"

"Yes. But I don't want ever to look long on what I hate."

"You aren't afraid you might cease from hating it!"

"Oh no. But I believe in feeding always on wholesome food."

"Modern London doesn't."

"I shall never be modern, I'm afraid," she said, half laughing, and with a soft touch of apparently genuine deprecation.

"Be eternal, that's better!" he almost whispered. "Listen to that nightingale. It's singing a song of all the ages. You have a message like that for me."

They had strolled out after dinner in the warm May night, and had walked a little way up the steep flank of Lycabettos till they reached a wooden bench near which were a few small fir trees. Somewhere among these trees there was hidden a nightingale, which sang with intensity to Athens spread out below, a small maze of mellow lights and of many not inharmonious voices. Even in the night, and at a distance, they felt the smiling intimacy of the little city they loved. Its history was like a living thing dwelling among the shadows, hallowed and hallowing, its treasures, like night flowers, breathed out a mysterious message to them. They received it, and felt that they understood it. Had the nightingale been singing to any city its song must have seemed to them beautiful. But it was singing to Athens, and that fact gave to its voice, in their ears, a magical meaning.

They sat for a while in silence. Nobody passed on the winding path. Their impulse to solitude was unshared by the dwellers in Athens. Neither knew exactly what thoughts were passing through the other's mind, what aspirations were flaming up in the heart of the other. But they knew that they were close bound in sympathy just then, voyaging towards a common future. That future lay over the sea in grey England. Their time in Greece was but an interlude. But in it they were gathering up impressions, were laying in stores for their journey. The nightingale's song was part of their provision. It had to sing to just them for some hidden reason. And to Dion it seemed that the nightingale knew the reason while they did not, that it comprehended all the under things of love and of sorrow of which they were ignorant. When he spoke again he said:

"A bird's song always makes me feel very unlearned. Do you know what I mean?"

"Yes. We've got to learn so much."

"Together."

"Yes—partly."

"Partly?" he said quickly.

"I think there's a great deal that can only be learnt quite alone."

Again, as sometimes before, Dion trod on the verges of mystery, felt as if something in Rosamund eluded him, and was chilled for a moment.

"I dare say you are right," he said. "But I believe I could learn any lesson more easily with you to help me."

"No, I don't think so."

"Perhaps we shall know which is right, you or I, when we've been much longer together," he said, with an effort to speak lightly.

"Yes."

"Rosamund, sometimes you make me feel as if you thought I didn't know you, I mean didn't know you thoroughly."

"Do I?"

"Yes."

Again silence fell between them. As Dion listened once more to the persistent nightingale he felt that there was pain somewhere at the back of its ecstasy. He looked down at the soft lights of little Athens, and suddenly knew that much sorrow lay in the shadows of all the cities of the earth. There was surely a great reserve in the girl who had given herself to him. That was natural, perhaps. But to-night he felt that she was aware of this reserve and was consciously guarding it like a sacred thing. Presently they got up and went slowly down the hill.

"Suppose you had never married," he said, as they drew near to the city, "how would you have lived, do you think?"

"Perhaps for my singing, at first," she answered.

"And afterwards?"

"Afterwards? Very quietly, I think."

"You won't tell me."

"I don't know for certain, and what does it matter? I have married. If I hadn't, perhaps I should have been very selfish and thought myself very self-sacrificing."

"I wonder in what way selfish."

"There are so many ways. I heard a sermon once on a foggy night in London."

"Ah—that evening I called on you."

"I didn't say so. It made me understand egoism better than I had understood it before. Perhaps it's the unpardonable sin."

"Then it could never be your sin."

"Hush!"

They no longer heard the nightingale. The voices and the houses of Athens were about them.

As the days slipped by, Dion felt that Rosamund and he grew closer together. He knew, though he could not perhaps have said how, that he would be the only man in her intimate life. Even if he died she would never—he felt sure of this—yield herself to another man. The tie between them was to her a bond for eternity. Her body would never be given twice. That he knew. But sometimes he asked himself whether her whole soul would ever be given even once. The insatiable greed of a great and exclusive love was alive within him, needing always something more than it had. At first, after their marriage, he had not been aware of this greed, had not realized that nothing great is content to remain just as it is at a given moment. His love had to progress, and gradually, in Greece, he became conscious of this fact.

His inner certainty, quite unshakable, that Rosamund would never belong to another man in the physical sense made jealousy of an ordinary kind impossible to him. The lowness, the hideous vulgarity of the jealousy which tortures the writhing flesh would never be his. Yet he wanted more than he had sometimes, stretched out arms to something which did not come to nestle against him.

There was a great independence in Rosamund, he thought, which set her apart from other women. Not only could she bear to be alone, she sometimes wished to be alone. Dion, on the contrary, never wished to be away from her. It might be necessary for him to leave her. He was not a young doting fool who could not detach himself even for a moment from his wife's apron strings. But he knew very well that at all times he preferred to be with her, close to her, that he relished everything more when he was in her company than when he was alone. She added to his power of enjoyment, to his faculty of appreciation, by being beside him. The Parthenon even was made more sublime to him by her. That was a mystery. And the mystery of her human power to increase penetrated everywhere through their life in common, like a percolating flood that could not be gainsaid. She manifested her influence upon him subtly through the maidens of the Porch, through the almost neat perfection of the Theseion, through the detached grandeur of those columns in the waste place, that golden and carved Olympieion which acts as an outpost to Athens. It was as if she had the power to put something of herself into everything that he cared for

so that he might care for it more, whether it were a golden sunset on the sea over which they drifted in a sailing-boat off the coast of old Phaleron, or a marble figure in a museum. She dwelt in the stones of a ruined temple ; she set her feet upon the dream of the distant mountains ; she was in the dawn, the twilight, and in all the ways of the moon, because he loved her and found her in all things when they were together.

He did not know whether she, in a similar mysterious way, found him in all that she enjoyed. He did not ask her the question. Perhaps, really, in that truth of apprehension which lives very far down in a man, he had divined the answer, although he told himself that he did not know.

He found always something new to enjoy and to worship in Rosamund.

They had many tastes in common. At first, of deliberate choice, they had bounded their honeymoon with the precipices of the Acropolis, learning the Doric lesson on that height above the world. Then one day they had made a great sacrifice and gone to pass their hours in the pine woods of Kephissia. They had returned to the Acropolis quite athirst. But by degrees the instinct to wander a little farther afield took greater hold upon them, their love of physical exercise asserted itself. They began to take long rides on horseback, carrying food in their saddle-bags. The gently wild charm of Greece laid its spell upon them. They both loved Athens, but now they began to love, too, escaping from Athens.

Directly they were out of the city they were in a freedom that appealed to the gipsy in both. Dion's strong boyishness, which had never yet been cast off, was met and countered by the best of good fellowship in Rosamund. Though she could be very serious, and even what he called "strange," she was never depressed or sad. Her good spirits were unfailing and infectious. She revelled in a "jaunt" or a "day out," and her physical strength kept fatigue far from her. She could ride for many hours without losing her freshness and zest. Every little episode of the wayside interested and entertained her. Everything comic made her laugh. She showed an ardour almost like an intelligent child's in getting to understand all she saw. Scenery, buildings, animal life, people, every offering of Greece was eagerly accepted, examined and discussed by her. She was the perfect comrade for the wilds. Their common joy in the wilds drew her and Dion more closely together. Never before had Rosamund been

quite away from civilization, from the hitherto easily borne trammels of modern complicated life. She " found herself " in the adventure. The pure remoteness of Greece came to her like natal air. She breathed it in with a sort of rapture. It was as Dion had said. She was not merely in, she was of, Greece.

They rode one day to Eleusis ; on another day to Tatoi, buried in oak-woods on the slope of Parnes ; on another through noisy and mongrel Piræus, and over undulating wrinkled ground, burnt up by the sun and covered with low scrub and bushes of myrtle, to the shore of the gulf opposite to Salamis ; on yet another to Marathon, where they lunched on the famous mound beneath which the bodies of the Athenians who fell in the battle were buried. They took no companion with them. Dion carried a revolver in his hip pocket, but never had reason to show or to use it. When they dismounted they tethered the horses to a bush or tree, or sometimes hobbled their forelegs, and turned them loose for a while.

Such days were pure joy to them both. In them they went back to the early world. They did not make the hard and self-conscious imaginative effort of the prig to hurl themselves into an historic past. They just let the land and its memories take them. As, sitting on the warm ground among the wild myrtle bushes, they looked across the emerald green unruffled waters to Salamis, that very long isle with its calm grey and orange hills and its indented shores, perhaps for a moment they talked of the Queen of Halicarnassus, and of the deception of Xerxes watching from his throne on Mount Ægaleos. But the waters were now so solitary, the peace about them was so profound, that the memory of battles soon faded away in the sunshine. Terror and death had been here once. A queen had destroyed her own people in that jewelled sea, a king had fled from those delicate mountains. But now sea and land were for lovers. A fly with shining wings journeyed among the leaves of the myrtles, a beetle crept over the hot sandy ground leaving a minute pattern behind it ; and Rosamund and Dion forgot all about Artemisia, as they brooded, wide-eyed, over the activities of the dwellers in the waste. At such moments they realized the magic of life, as they had never realized it in the turmoil of London. The insect with its wings that caught the sun, the intent and preoccupied little traveller whose course could be deflected by a twig, revealed the wonder that is lost and forgotten in the crowded highways of men.

It was when they were at Marathon that Rosamund told Dion she loved Greece partly because of its emptiness. The country was not only rather bare of vegetation, despite its groves of glorious old olives, its woods of oaks round Tatoi, its delicious curly forests of yellow-green pines, which looked, Rosamund declared, as if they had just had their dainty heads perfectly dressed by an accomplished coiffeur, it was also almost strangely bare of men.

"Where are the Greeks?" Rosamund had often asked during their first few rides, as they cantered on and on, scarcely ever meeting a human being.

"In the towns to be sure!" Dion had answered.

"And where are the towns?"

"Ah! That's more than I can tell you!" he had said, laughing.

To one hitherto accustomed to England, the emptiness of the country, even quite near to Athens, was at first surprising. Soon it became enchanting.

"This is a country I can thoroughly trust," Rosamund declared at Marathon.

Dion had just finished hobbling the two horses, and now lifted himself up. His brown face was flushed from bending. His thin riding-clothes were white with dust, which he beat off with hands that looked almost as if they wore gloves, so deeply were they dyed by the sun. As the cloud dispersed he emerged carrying their lunch in a straw pannier.

"Why trust—specially?" he said. "Ah," he threw himself down by her side with a sigh of happiness, "this is good! The historic mound, and we think of it merely as a resting-place, vandals that we are. But—why trust?"

"I mean that Greece never keeps any unpleasant surprises up her sleeve, surprises such as other countries have of noisy, intruding people. It's terrible how accustomed I'm getting to having everything all to myself, and how I simply love it."

He began slowly unpacking the pannier, and laying its contents out on the mound.

"You're a puzzle, Rosamund," he said.

"Why?"

"You have a greater faculty for making yourself delightful to all sorts of people than I have found in any other person, woman or man. And yet you are developing a perfect passion for solitude."

"Do you want people here?"

"No."

"Then you agree with me."

"But you have an absolute lust for an empty world."

"Look!"

She stretched out her right arm—she was leaning on the other with her cheek in her hand—and pointed to the crescent-shaped plain which lay beyond them, bounded by a sea which was a wonder of sparkling and intense blue, and guarded by a curving line of low hills. There were some clouds in the sky, but the winds were at rest, and the clouds were just white things dreaming. In the plain there were no trees. Here and there some vague crops hinted at the languid labours of men. No human beings were visible, but in the distance, not very far from the sea edge, a few oxen were feeding. Their dark slow-moving bodies intersected the blue. There were no ships or boats upon the stretch of sea which Rosamund and Dion gazed at. Behind them the bare hills showed no sign of life. The solitude was profound but not startling. It seemed in place, necessary and beautiful. In the emptiness there was something touching, something reticently satisfying. It was a land and seascape delicately purged.

"Greece and solitude," said Rosamund. "I shall always connect them together. I shall always love each for the other's sake."

In the silence which followed the words the far-off lowing of oxen came to them over the flats. Rosamund shut her eyes, Dion half shut his, and the empty world was a shining dream.

When they had lunched, Rosamund said:

"I'm going to climb up into that house. The owner will never come, I'm sure."

Near them upon the mound was a dwelling of Arcady, in which surely a shepherd sometimes lay and piped to the sun and the sea god. It was lifted upon a tripod of poles, and was deftly made of brushwood, with roof, floor and two walls all complete. A ladder of wood, from which the bark had been stripped, led up to it.

"You want to sleep?" Dion asked.

She looked at him.

"Perhaps."

He helped her up to her feet. Quickly she mounted the ladder and stepped into the room.

"Good-bye!" she said, looking down at him and smiling.

"Good-bye!" he answered, looking up.

She made a pretence of shutting a door and withdrawing into privacy. He lit his pipe, hesitated a moment, then went to lie down under her room. Now he no longer saw her, but he heard her movements overhead. The dry brushwood crackled as she lay down, as she settled herself. She was lying surely at full length. He guessed that she had stretched out her arms and put her two hands under her head. She sighed. Below he echoed her sigh with a long breath of contentment. Then they both lay very still.

Marathon !

He remembered his schoolbooks. He remembered beginning Greek. He had never been very good at Greek. His mother, if she had been a man and had gone to Oxford or Cambridge, would have made a far better classic than he. She had helped him sometimes during the holidays when he was quite small. He remembered exactly how she had looked when he had been conjugating παύω—half-loving and half-satirical. He had made a good many mistakes. He had said that ἔπανον was the first aorist active, and his mother had remarked, " Not yet, dee-ar ! " as if, perhaps, the verb were on the way towards his conception of it out of sheer politeness. One never knew. Later he had read Greek history with his mother, he had read about the battle of Marathon.

" Marathon "—it was written in his school history, " became a magic word at Athens . . . the one hundred and ninety-two Athenians who had perished in the battle were buried on the field, and over their remains a tumulus or mound was erected, which may still be seen about half a mile from the sea." As a small boy he had read that with a certain inevitable detachment. And now here he lay, a man, on that very tumulus, and the brushwood creaked above his head with the movement of the woman he loved.

How wonderful was the weaving of the Fates !

And if some day he should sit in the place of his mother, and should hear a small boy, his small boy, conjugating παύω ! By Jove ! He would have to rub up his classics ! Not for ten years old ; he wasn't so bad as that ; but for twenty, when the small boy would be going up to Oxford, and would, perhaps, be turning out alarmingly learned.

Rosamund the mother of a young man !

But Dion shied away from that. He could imagine her as the mother of a child, beautiful mother of a child almost

as beautiful ; but he could not conceive of her as the " mater " of a person with a moustache.

Their youth, their youth—must it go ?

Again she moved slightly above him. The twigs crackled, making an almost irritable music of dryness. Again the lowing of cattle came over that old battlefield from the edge of the sea. And just then, at that very moment, Dion knew that his great love could not stand still, that, like all great things, it must progress. And the cry, that intense human cry, " Whither ? " echoed in the deep places of his soul. Whither were he and his great love going ? To what end were they journeying ? For a moment sadness invaded him, the sadness of one who thinks and is very ignorant. Why cannot a man think deeply without thinking of an end ? " All things come to an end ! " That cruel saying went through his mind like footsteps echoing on iron, and a sense of fear encompassed him. There is something terrible in a great love, set in the little life of a man like a vast light in a tiny attic.

Did Rosamund ever have such thoughts ? Dion longed to ask her. Was she sleeping perhaps now ? She was lying very still. If they ever had a child its coming would mark a great step onwards along the road, the closing of a very beautiful chapter in their book of life. It would be over, their loneliness in love, man and woman in solitude. Even the sexual tie would be changed. All the world would be changed.

He lay flat on the ground, stretched out, his elbows firmly planted, his chin in his palms, his face set towards the plain and the sea.

What he looked at seemed gently to chide him. There were such a brightness and simplicity and such a delicious freedom from all complication in this Grecian landscape edged by the wide frankness of the sea that he felt reassured. Edging the mound there were wild aloes and the wild oleander. A river intersected the plain which in many places was tawny yellow. Along the river bank grew tall reeds, sedges and rushes. Beyond the plain, and beyond the blue waters, rose the Island of Eubœa, and ranges of mountains, those mountains of Greece which are so characteristic in their unpretentious bareness, which neither overwhelm nor entice, but which are unfailingly delicate, unfailingly beautiful, quietly, almost gently, noble. In the distance, when he turned his head, Dion could see the little Albanian village of

Marathon, a huddle of tiny houses far off under the hills. He looked at it for a moment, then again looked out over the plain, rejoicing in its emptiness. Along the sea edge the cattle were straying, but their movements were almost imperceptible. Still they were living things and drew Dion's eyes. The life in them sent out its message to the life in him, and he earnestly watched them grazing. Their vague and ruminating movements really emphasized the profound peace which lay around Rosamund and him. To watch them thus was a savouring of peace. For every contented animal is a bearer of peaceful tidings. In the Garden of Eden with the Two there were happy animals. And Dion recalled the great battle which had dyed red this serene wilderness, a battle which was great because it had been greatly sung, lifted up by the music of poets, set on high by the lips of orators. He looked over the land and thought: "Here Miltiades won the name which has resounded through history. To that shore, where I see the cattle, the Persians were driven." And it seemed to him that the battle of Marathon had been fought in order that Rosamund and he, in the nineteenth century, might be drawn to this place to meet the shining afternoon. Yes, it was fought for that, and to make this place the more wonderful for them. It was their Garden of Eden consecrated by History.

What a very small animal that was which had strayed away from its kind over the tawny ground where surely there was nothing to feed upon! The little dark body of it looked oddly detached as it moved along. And now another animal was following it quickly. The arrival of the second darkness, running, made Dion know that the first was human, the guardian of the beasts, no doubt.

So Eden was invaded already! He smiled as he thought of the serpent. The human being came on slowly, always moving in the direction of the mound, and always accompanied by its attendant animal—a dog, of course. Soon Dion knew that both were making for the mound. It occurred to him that Rosamund was in the private room of him who was approaching, was possibly sound asleep there.

"Rosamund!" he almost whispered.

There was no answer.

"Rosamund!" he murmured, looking upward to his roof, which was her floor.

"Hush!" came down to him through the brushwood. "I'm willing it to come to us."

"What—the guardian of the cattle ?"
"Guardian of the——! It's a child !"
"How do you know ?"
"I do know. Now you're not to frighten it."
"Of course not !"

He lay very still, his chin in his palms, watching the oncomers. How had she known ? And then, seeing suddenly through her eyes, he knew that of course it was a child, that it could not be anything else. All its movements now proclaimed to him its childishness, and he watched it with a sort of fascination.

For he had never yet seen Rosamund with a child. That would be for him a new experience with something, perhaps, prophetic in it.

Child and animal approached steadily, keeping an undeviating course, and presently Dion saw a very small, but sturdy, Greek boy of perhaps ten years old, wearing a collarless shirt, open at a deep brown throat, leggings of some thin material, boots, and a funny little patched brown coat and pointed hood made all in one, and hanging down with a fulness almost of skirts about the small determined legs. The accompanying dog was a very sympathetic, blunt-nosed, round-headed, curly-coated type, whose whiteness, which positively invited the stroking hand, was broken by two great black blotches set all askew on the back, and by a black patch which ringed the left eye and completely smothered the cocked-up left ear. The child carried a stick, which nearly reached to his shoulder, and which ended in a long and narrow crook. The happy dog, like its master, had no collar.

When these two reached the foot of the tumulus they stood still and stared upwards. The dog uttered a short gruff bark, looked at the boy, wagged a fat tail, barked again, abruptly depressed the fore part of its body till its chin was against the ground between its paws, then jumped into the air with a sudden demeanour of ludicrously young, and rather uncouth, waggishness, which made Dion laugh.

The small boy replied with a smile almost as sturdy as his legs, which he now permitted to convey him with decisive firmness through the wild aloes and oleanders to the summit of the tumulus. He stood before Dion, holding his crooked staff tightly in his right hand, but his large dark eyes were directed upwards. Evidently his attention was not to be given to Dion. His dog, on the contrary, after a stare and two muffled attempts at a menacing bark, came to make

friends with Dion in a way devoid of all dignity, full of curves, wrigglings, tail waggings and grins which exposed rows of smiling teeth.

"Dion!" came Rosamund's voice from above.

"Yes?"

"Do show him the way up. He wants to come up."

Dion got up, took the little Greek's hand firmly, led him to the foot of the ladder, and pointed to Rosamund who leaned from her brushwood chamber and held out inviting hands, smiling, and looking at the child with shining eyes. He understood that he was very much wanted, gravely placed his staff on the ground, laid hold of the ladder, and slowly clambered up, with the skirts of his coat sticking out behind him. His dog set up a loud barking, scrambled at the ladder, and made desperate efforts to follow him.

"Help him up, Dion!" came the commanding voice from above.

Dion seized the curly coat of the dog—picked up handfuls of dog. There was a struggle. The dog made fierce motions as if swimming, and whined in a thin and desperate soprano. Its body heaved upwards, its forepaws clutched the edge of the brushwood floor, and it arrived.

"Bravo!" cried Rosamund, as she proceeded to settle down with her guests. "But why don't I know Greek?"

"It doesn't matter," Dion murmured, standing with his hands on the ladder. "You know their language."

Rosamund was sitting now, half-curled up, with her back against the brushwood wall. Her light sun-helmet lay on the floor. In her ruffled hair were caught two or three thin brown leaves, their brittle edges curled inwards. The little boy, slightly smiling, yet essentially serious, as are children tested by a great new experience, squatted close to her and facing her, with one leg under him, the other leg stretched out confidentially, as much as to say, "Here it is!" The dog lay close by panting, smiling, showing as much tongue and teeth as was caninely possible in the ardour of feeling tremendously uplifted, important, one of the very few.

And Rosamund proceeded to entertain her guests.

What did she do? Sometimes, long afterwards in England, Dion, recalling that day—a very memorable day in his life—asked himself the question. And he could never remember very much. But he knew that Rosamund showed him new aspects of tenderness and fun. What do women who love and understand little boys do to put them at their

ease, to break down their small shynesses? Rosamund did absurd things with deep earnestness and complete concentration. She invented games, played with twigs and straws which she drew from the walls of her chamber. She changed the dog's appearance by rearrangements of his ears, to which he submitted with a slobbering ecstasy, gazing at her with yellow eyes which looked flattened in his head. Turned quite back, their pink insides exposed to view, the ears changed him into a brand-new dog, at which his master stared with an amazement which soon was merged in gratification. With a pocket-handkerchief she performed marvels of impersonation which the boy watched with an almost severe intentness, even putting out his tongue slowly, and developing a slight squint, when the magician rose to the top of her powers. She conjured with a silver coin, and of course let the child play with her watch. She had realized at a glance that those things which would be considered as baby nonsense by an English boy of ten, to this small dweller on the plain of Marathon were full of the magic of the unknown. And at last :

"Throw me up an orange, Dion!" she cried. "I know there are two or three left in the pannier."

Dion bent down eagerly, rummaged and found an orange.

"Here!" he said. "Catch!"

He threw it up. She caught it with elaboration to astonish the boy.

"What are you going to do?" asked Dion.

"Throw me up your pocket-knife and you'll see."

Again he threw and she caught, while the boy's mouth gaped.

"Now then!" cried Rosamund.

She set to work, and almost directly had introduced her astounded guest of the Greek kingdom to the famous "Crossing the Channel" tragedy.

So great was the effect of this upon little Miltiades,—so they both always called the boy when talking of him in after times,—that he began to perspire, and drops of saliva fell from the corners of his small and pouting mouth in imitation of the dreadfully human orange by which he was confronted. Thereupon Rosamund threw off all ceremony and frankly played the mother. She drew the boy, smiling sideways, to her, wiped his mouth with her handkerchief, gently blew his small nose and gave him a warm kiss.

"There!" she said.

And upon this the child made a remark.

Neither of them ever knew what it meant. It was long, and sounded like an explanation. Having spoken, Miltiades suddenly looked shy. He wriggled towards the top of the ladder. Dion thought that Rosamund would try to stop him from leaving her, but she did not. On the contrary, she drew up her legs and made way for him, carefully. The child deftly descended, picked up his staff and turned. The dog, barking joyously, had leaped after him, and now gambolled around him. For a moment the child hesitated, and in that moment Dion popped the remains of their lunch into his coat pockets; then slowly he walked to the side of the tumulus by which he had come up. There he stood for two or three minutes staring once more up at Rosamund. She waved a friendly hand to him, boyishly, Dion thought. He smiled cautiously, then confidentially, suddenly turned and bolted down the slope uttering little cries—and so away once more to the far-off cattle on the old battlefield, followed by his curly dog.

When Dion had watched him into the distance, beyond which lay the shining glory of the sea, and looked up to Rosamund again, she was pulling the little dry leaves from her undulating hair.

"I'm all brushwood," she said, "and I love it."

"So do I."

"I ought to have been born a shepherdess. Why do you look at me like that?"

"Perhaps because I'm seeing a new girl who's got even more woman in her than I knew till to-day."

"Most women are like that, Dion, when they get the chance."

"To think you knew all those tricks and never told me!"

"Help me down."

He stretched out his arms to her. When she was on the ground he still held her for a moment.

"You darling!" he whispered. "Never shall I forget this day at Marathon, the shining, the child, and you—you!"

They did not talk much on the long ride homeward. The heat was great, but they were not afraid of it, for the shin ng fires of this land on the edge of the East cherished and did not burn them. The white dust lay deep on the road, and flew in light clouds from under the feet of their horses as they rode slowly upwards, leaving the blue of their pastoral behind them, and coming into the yellow of the pine woods.

Later, as they drew nearer to Athens, the ancient groves of the olives, touched with a gentle solemnity, would give them greeting; the fig trees and mulberry trees would be about them, and the long vineyards watched over by the aristocratic cypress lifting its dark spire to the sun. But now the kingdom of the pine trees joyously held them. They were in the happy woods in which even to breathe was sheer happiness. Now and then they pulled up and looked back to the crescent-shaped plain which held a child instead of armies. They traced the course of the river marked out by the reeds and sedges. They saw the tiny dark specks, which were cattle grazing, with the wonder of blue beyond them. In these moments, half-unconsciously, they were telling memory to lay in its provision for the future. Perhaps they would never come back; never again would Rosamund rest in her brush-wood chamber, never again would Dion hear the dry music above him, and feel the growth of his love, the urgency of its progress just as he had felt them that day. They might be intensely happy, but exactly the same happiness would probably not be theirs again through all the years that were coming. The little boy and his dog had doubtless gone out of their lives for ever. Their good-bye to Marathon might well be final. They looked back again and again, till the blue of the sea was lost to them. Then they rode on, faster. The horses knew they were going homeward, and showed a new liveliness, sharing the friskiness of the little graceful trees about them. Now and then the riders saw some dusty peasants—brown and sun-dried men wearing the fustanella, and shoes with turned-up toes ornamented with big black tassels; women with dingy handkerchiefs tied over their heads; children who looked almost like spawn of the sun in their healthy, bright-eyed brownness. And these people had cheerful faces. Their rustic lot seemed enviable. Who would not shed his sorrows under these pine trees, in this country where the solitudes radiated happiness, and even bareness was like music? Here was none of the heavy and exotic passion, none of the lustrous and almost morbid romance of the true and distant East, drowsy with voluptuous memories. That setting was not for Rosamund. Here were a lightness, a purity and sweetness of Arcadia, and people who looked both intelligent and simple.

At a turn of the road they met some Vlachs—rascally wanderers, lean as greyhounds, chicken-stealers and robbers in the night, yet with a sort of consecration of careless cheer-

fulness upon them. They called out. In their cries there was the sound of a lively malice. Their brown feet stirred up the dust and set it dancing in the sunshine, a symbol surely of their wayward, unfettered spirits. A little way off, on a slope among the trees, their dark tents could be partially seen.

"Lucky beggars!" murmured Dion, as he threw them a few small coins, while Rosamund smiled at them and waved her hand in answer to their greetings. "I believe it's the ideal life to dwell in the tents."

"It seems so to-day."

"Won't it to-morrow? Won't it when we are in London?"

"Perhaps more than ever then."

Was she gently evading an answer? They had reached the brow of the hill and put their horses to a canter. The white dust settled over them. They were like millers on horseback as they left the pine woods behind them. But the touch of the dust was as the touch of nature upon their faces and hands. They would not have been free of it as they rode towards Athens, and came to the region of the vineyards, of the olive groves and the cypresses. Now and then they passed ramshackle cafés made of boards roughly nailed together anyhow, with a straggle of vine sprawling over them, and the earth for a flooring. Tables were set out before them, or in their shadows; a few bottles were visible within; on benches or stools were grouped Greeks, old and young, busily talking, no doubt about politics. Carts occasionally passed by the riders, sending out dust to mingle with theirs. Turkeys gobbled at them, dogs barked in front of one-storied houses. They saw peasants sitting sideways on pattering donkeys, and now and then a man on horseback. By thin runlets of water were women, chattering as they washed the clothes of their households. Then again, the horses came into the bright and solitary places where the cheerful loneliness of Greece held sway.

And so, at last they cantered into the outskirts of Athens when the evening was falling. Another day had slipped from them. But both felt it was a day which they had known very well, had realized with an unusual fulness.

"It's been a day of days!" Dion said that evening.

And Rosamund nodded assent.

A child had been in that day, and, with a child's irresistible might, had altered everything for them. Now Dion

knew how Rosamund would be with a child of her own, and Rosamund knew that Dion loved her more deeply because he had seen her with a child. A little messenger had come to them over the sun-dried plain of Marathon bearing a gift of knowledge.

The next day they spent quietly. In the morning they visited the National Museum, and in the late afternoon they returned to the Acropolis.

In the Museum Rosamund was fascinated by the tombs. She, who always seemed so remote from sorrow, who, to Dion, was the personification of vitality and joyousness, was deeply moved by the record of death, by the wonderfully restrained, and yet wonderfully frank, suggestion of the grief of those who, centuries ago, had mingled their dust with the dust of the relations, the lovers, the friends, whom they had mourned for.

"What a lesson this is for me!" she murmured at last, after standing for a long while wrapped in silence and contemplation.

"Why for you, specially?" he asked.

She looked up at him. There were tears in her eyes. He believed she was hesitating, undecided whether to let him into a new chamber of her being, or whether to close a half-opened door against him.

"It's very difficult to submit, I think, for some of us," she answered, after a pause, slowly. "Those old Greeks must have known how to do it."

"To submit to sorrow?"

"Yes, to a great sorrow. Such a thing is like an attack in the dark. If I am attacked I want to strike back and hurt."

"But whom could you reasonably hurt on account of a death that came in the course of nature? That's what you mean, isn't it?"

"Yes."

After a slight hesitation she said:

"Do you mean that you don't think we can hurt God?"

"I wonder," Dion answered.

"I don't. I know we can."

She looked again at the tomb before which they were standing. It showed a woman seated and stretching out her right arm, which a woman friend was touching. In the background were another, contemplative, woman and a man wearing a chaplet of leaves, his hand lifted to his face. For epitaph there was one word, "χαῖρε," cut in the marble.

"'Χαῖρε' means farewell, doesn't it?" asked Rosamund.

"Yes."

"Perhaps you'll smile, but I think these tombs are the most beautiful things I have seen in Greece. It's a miracle—their lack of violence. What a noble thing grief could be. That little simple 'χαῖρε'! It's great to be able to give up the dearest thing with that one little word. But I couldn't —I couldn't."

"How do you know?"

"I know, because I didn't."

She said nothing more on the subject that morning, but when they were on the Acropolis waiting, as so often before, for the approach of the evening, she returned to it. Evidently it was haunting her that day.

"I believe giving up nobly is a much finer thing than attaining nobly," she said. "And yet attaining wins all the applause, and giving up, if it gets anything, only gets that ugly thing—pity."

"But is pity an ugly thing?" said Dion.

He had a little stone in his hand, and, as he spoke, he threw it gently towards the precipice, taking care not to send it over the edge.

"I think I would rather have anything on earth from people than their pity."

"Suppose I were to pity you because I loved you?"

He picked up another stone and held it in his hand.

"I should hate it."

He had lifted his hand for the throw, but he kept hold of the stone.

"What, pity that came straight out of love?"

"Any sort of pity."

"You must be very proud—much prouder than I am then. If I were unhappy I should wish to have pity from you."

"Perhaps you have never been really unhappy."

Dion laid the stone down. He thought hard for a moment.

"Without any hope at all of a change back to happiness—no, actually I never have."

"Ah, then you've never had to brace up and see if you could find a strong voice to utter your 'χαῖρε'!"

She spoke with firmness, a firmness that rang like true metal struck with a hammer and giving back sincerity.

"That sounds tremendously Doric," he said.

His lips were smiling, but there was an almost surprised expression in his eyes.

"Dion, do you know you're intuitive to-day?"

"Ah, your training—your training!"

"Didn't you say we should have to be Doric ourselves if——?"

"Come, Rosamund, it's time for the Parthenon."

Once more they went over the uneven ground to stand before its solemn splendour.

"Shall we have learnt before we go?" said Dion.

"It's strange, but I think the tombs teach me more. They're more within my reach. This is so tremendous that it's remote. Perhaps a man, or—or a boy——"

"A boy?"

She looked at him.

"Yes."

He drew her down. She clasped her hands, that looked to him so capable and so pure, round her knees.

"A boy? Go on, Rose."

"He might learn his lesson here, with a man to help him. The Parthenon's tremendously masculine. Perhaps women have to learn from the gentleness of those dear tombs."

Never before had she seemed to him so soft, so utterly soft of nature.

"You've been thinking a great deal to-day of our boy, haven't you?" he said.

"Yes."

"Suppose we did have a boy and lost him?"

"Lost him?"

Her voice sounded suddenly almost hostile.

"Such a thing has happened to parents. It might happen to us."

"I don't believe it would happen to me," Rosamund said, with a sort of curious, almost cold decision.

"But why not?"

"What made you think of such a thing?"

"I don't know. Perhaps it was because of what you said this morning about grief, and then about bracing up and finding a firm voice to utter one's 'χαῖρε.'"

"You don't understand what a woman would feel who lost her child."

"Are you sure that you do?"

"Partly. Quite enough to—— Don't let us speak about it any more."

"No. There's nothing more futile than imagining horrors that are never coming upon us."

"I never do it," she said, with resolute cheerfulness. "But we shall very soon have to say one 'χαῖρε.'"

"To the Parthenon?"

"Yes."

"Say it to-night."

She turned round to face him.

"To-night? Why?"

"For a little while."

A sudden happy idea had come to him. A shadow had fallen over her for a moment. He wanted to drive it away, to set her again in the full sunshine for which she was born, and in which, if he could have his will, she should always dwell.

"You wanted to take me away somewhere."

"Yes. You must see a little more of Greece before we go home. Say your 'χαῖρε,' Rosamund."

She did not know what was in his mind, but she obeyed him, and, looking up at the great marble columns, glowing with honey-colour and gold in the afternoon light, she murmured:

"Χαῖρε."

On the following day they left Athens and set out on the journey to Olympia.

## CHAPTER V

"WHY are you bringing me to Olympia?"

That question, unuttered by her lips, was often in Rosamund's eyes as they drew near to the green wilds of Elis. Of course they had always meant to visit Olympia before they sailed away to England, but she knew very well that Dion had some special purpose in his mind, and that it was closely connected with his great love of her. She had understood that on the Acropolis, and her "χαῖρε" had been an act of submission to his will not wholly unselfish. Her curiosity was awake.

What was the secret of Olympia?

They had gone by train to Patras, slept there, and thence rode on horseback to Pyrgos through the vast vineyards of the Peloponnesus—vineyards that stretched down to the

sea and were dotted with sentinel cypresses. The heat was much greater than it had been in Athens. Enormous aloes hedged gardens from which came scents that seemed warm. The sandy soil, turned up by the horses' feet, was hot to the touch. The air quivered, and was shot with a music of insects faint but pervasive.

Pyrgos was suffocating and noisy, but Rosamund was amused by democracy at close quarters, showing its naked love of liberty. Her strong humanity rose to the occasion, and she gave herself with a smiling willingness to the streets, in which men, women, children and animals, with lungs of leather, sent forth their ultimate music. Nevertheless, she was glad when she and Dion set out again, and followed the banks of the Alpheus, leaving the cries of the city behind them. It seemed to her that they were travelling to some hidden treasure, secluded in the folds of a green valley where the feet of men seldom, if ever, came. Dion's eyes told her that they were drawing nearer and nearer to the secret he knew of, and was going to reveal to her. She often caught him looking at her with an almost boyish expression of loving anticipation ; and more than once he laughed happily when he saw her question, but he would not give her an answer.

Peasants worked in the vineyards, shoulder-high in the plants, brown and sweating in the glare. Swarthy children, with intelligent eyes, often with delicate noses, and those pouting lips which are characteristic of many Greek statues, ran to stare at them, and sometimes followed them a little way, but without asking for alms. Then the solitudes took them, and they wound on and on, with their guide as their only companion.

He was a gentle, even languid-looking youth, called Nicholas Agathoulos, who was a native of Patras, but who had lived a good deal in Athens, who spoke a few words of English and French, and who professed a deep passion for Lord Byron. Nicholas rode on a mule, leading, or not leading as the case might be—for he was a charmingly careless person—a second mule on which was fastened Rosamund's and Dion's scanty luggage. Rosamund, like a born vagabond, was content to travel in this glorious climate with scarcely any impedimenta. When Nicholas was looked at he smiled peacefully under his quiet and unpretending black moustache. When he was not looked at he seemed to sleep with open eyes. He never sang or whistled, had no music at all in him ; but he could quote stanzas from

"Don Juan" in Greek, and, when he did that, he woke up, sparks of fire glowed in his eyes, and his employers realized that he shared to the full the patriotism of his countrymen.

Did he know the secret of Olympia which Dion was concealing so carefully, and enjoying so much, as the little train of pilgrims wound onwards among fruit trees and shrubs of arbutus, penetrating farther and ever farther into a region sweet and remote? Of course he must know it.

"I shall ask Nicholas," Rosamund said once to Dion, perversely.

"What?"

"You know perfectly well what."

His face was a map of innocence as he touched his thin horse with the whip and rode forward a little faster.

"What is there to see at Olympia, Nicholas?" she said, speaking rather loudly in order that Dion might hear.

Nicholas woke up, and hastily, in a melodious voice, quoted some scraps of guide-book. Rosamund did not find what she wanted among them. She knew already about the ruins, about the Nike of Pæonius and the Hermes of Praxiteles. So she left the young Greek to his waking dream, and possessed her soul in a patience that was not difficult. She liked to dwell in anticipation. And she felt that any secret this land was about to reveal to her would be, must be, beautiful. She trusted Greece.

"We aren't far off now," said Dion presently, as they rode up the valley—a valley secluded from the world, pastoral and remote, shaded by Judas trees.

"How peaceful and lovely it is."

"And full of the echoes of the Pagan feet which once trod here."

"I don't hear them," said Rosamund, "and I am listening."

"Perhaps you could never hear Pagan echoes. And yet you love Greece."

"Yes. But I have nothing Pagan in me. I know that."

"It doesn't matter," he said. "You are the ideal woman to be in Greece with. If I don't come back to Greece with you, I shall never come back."

They rode on. Her horse was following his along the windings of the river. Presently she said:

"Where are we going to sleep? Surely there isn't a possible inn in this remoteness?—or have they built one for the travellers who come here in winter and spring?"

"Our inn will be a little above Olympia."

The green valley seemed closing about them, as if anxious to take them to itself, to keep them in its closest intimacy, with a gentle jealousy. Rosamund had a sensation, almost voluptuous, of yielding to the pastoral greenness, to the warm stillness, to the hush of the delicate wilds.

"Elis! Elis!" she whispered to herself. "I am riding up into Elis, where once the processions passed to the games, where Nero built himself a mansion. And there's a secret here for me."

Then suddenly there came into her mind the words in the "Paradiso" which she had been dreaming over in London on the foggy day when Dion had asked her to marry him.

"Regnum coelorum violenza pate
da caldo amore a da viva speranza,
Che vince la divina volontate."

The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence from warm love and living hope which conquereth the Divine will.

It was strange that the words should come to her just then. She could not think why they came. But, repeating them to herself, she felt how very far off she was from Paganism. Yet she had within her warm love surely and living hope. Could such things, as they were within her, ever do violence to the Kingdom of Heaven? She looked between her horse's perpetually moving ears at the hollow athletic back of her young husband. If she had not married she would have given rein to deep impulses within her which now would never be indulged. They would not have led her to Greece. If she had been governed by them she would never have been drawn on by the secret of Olympia. How strange it was that, within the compass of one human being, should be contained two widely differing characters. Well, she had chosen, and henceforth she must live according to the choice she had made. But how would she have been in the other life of which she had dreamed so often, and so deeply, in her hours of solitude? She would never know that. She had chosen the warm love and the living hope, but the Kingdom of Heaven should never suffer violence from anything she had chosen. There are doubtless many ways of consecrating a life, of rendering service.

They came into a scattered and dingy hamlet. Hills rose about it, but the narrowing valley still wound on.

"We are close to the ruins," said Dion.

"Already! Where are we going to sleep?"

"Up there!"

He pointed to a steep hill that was set sheer above the valley.

"Go on with the mules, Nicholas."

Nicholas rode on, smiling.

"What's that building on the hump?"

"The Museum."

"I wonder why they put the inn so far away."

"It isn't really very far, not many minutes from here. But the way's pretty steep. Now then, Rosamund!"

They set their horses to the task. Nicholas and the mules were out of sight. A bend of the little track had hidden them.

"Why, there's a village up here!" said Rosamund, as they came to a small collection of houses with yards and rough gardens and scattered outbuildings.

"Yes—Drouva. Our inn is just beyond it, but quite separated from it."

"I'm glad of that. They don't bother very much about cleanliness here, I should think."

He was smiling at her now. His lips were twitching under his moustache, and his eyes seemed trying not to tell something to her.

"Surely the secret isn't up here?"

He shook his head, still smiling, almost laughing.

They were now beyond the village, and emerged on a plateau of rough short grass which seemed to dominate the world.

"This is the top of the hill of Drouva," said Dion, with a ring of joy, and almost of pride, in his voice. "And there's our inn, the Inn of Drouva."

Rosamund pulled up her horse. She did not say a word. She just looked, while her horse lowered his head and sniffed the air in through his twitching nostrils. Then he sent forth a quivering neigh, his welcome to the Inn of Drouva. The view was immense, but Rosamund was not looking at it. A small dark object not far off in the foreground of this great picture held her eyes. For the moment she saw little or nothing else.

She saw a dark, peaked tent pitched in the middle of the plateau. Smoke from a fire curled up behind it. Two or three figures moved near it. Beyond, Nicholas was unloading the mules.

She dropped the cord by which she had been guiding her horse and slipped down to the ground. Her legs were rather stiff from riding. She held on to the saddle for a moment.

"A camp?" she said at last.

Dion was beside her.

"An awfully rough one."

"How jolly!"

She said the words almost solemnly.

"Dion, you are a brick!" she added, after a pause. "I've never stayed in a camp before. A real brick! But you always are."

"Aren't you coming into the camp?"

She put her hand on his arm and kept him back.

"No—wait! What did you mean by shaking your head when I asked you if the secret was up here?"

"This isn't the real secret. It wasn't because of this that I asked you suddenly on the Acropolis to say 'χαῖρε' to the Parthenon."

"There's another secret?"

"There's another reason, the real reason, why I hurried you to Olympia. But I'm going to let you find it out for yourself. I shan't tell you anything."

"But how shall I know when——?"

"You will know."

"To-day?"

"Don't you think we might stay on our hill-top till to-morrow?"

"Yes, all right. It's glorious here; I won't be impatient. But how could you manage to get the tent here before we came?"

"We've been two nights on the way, Patras and Pyrgos. That gave plenty of time to the magician to work the spell. Come along."

This time she did not hold him back. Her eagerness was as great as his. Certainly it was a very ordinary camp, scarcely, in fact, a camp at all. The tent was small and of the roughest kind, but there were two neat little camp-beds within it, with their toes planted on the short dry grass. In the iron washhand stand were a shining white basin and a jug filled with clear water. There was a cake of remarkable pink soap with a strange and piercing scent; there was a "tooth glass"; there was a straw mat.

"What isn't there?" cried Rosamund, who was almost as delighted as a child.

A grave and very handsome gentleman from Athens, Achilles Stavros by name, received her congratulations with a classical smile of satisfaction.

"He's even got a genuine Greek nose for the occasion!" Rosamund said delightedly to Dion, when Achilles retired for a moment to give some instructions about tea to the cook. "Where did you find him?"

"That's my secret."

"I never realized how delicious a camp was before. My wildest dreams are surpassed."

As they looked at the two small, hard chairs with straw bottoms which were solemnly set out side by side facing the view, and upon which Achilles expected them to sink voluptuously for the ritual of tea, they broke into laughter at Rosamund's exaggerated expressions of delight. But directly she was able to stop laughing she affirmed with determination:

"I don't care what anybody says, or thinks; I repeat it"—she glanced from the straw mat to the cake of anæmic pink soap—"my wildest dreams are surpassed. To think"—she spread out her hands—"only to think of finding a tooth glass here! It's—it's admirable!"

She turned upon him an almost fanatical eye, daring contradiction; and they both laughed again, long and loud like two children who, suddenly aware of a keen physical pleasure, prolong it beyond all reasonable bounds.

"What are we going to have for tea?" she asked.

"Tea," Dion cried.

"You ridiculous creature!"

From a short distance, Achilles gazed upon the merriment of these newly-married English travellers. Nobody had told him they were newly married; he just knew it, had known it at a glance. As he watched, the laughter presently died away, and he saw the two walk forward to the edge of the small plateau, then stand still to gaze at the view.

The prospect from the hill of Drouva above Olympia is very great, and all Rosamund's inclination to merriment died out of her as she looked upon it. Even her joy in the camp was forgotten for a moment.

Upon their plateau, sole guests of the bareness, stood two small olive trees, not distorted by winds. Rosamund leaned against one of them as she gazed, put her arms round it with a sort of affectionate carelessness that was half-protective, that seemed to say, "You dear little tree! How nice of you to be here. But you almost want taking care of."

Then the tree was forgotten, and the Hellenic beauty reigned over her spirit, as she gazed upon the immense pastoral bounded by mountains and the sea; a green wilderness threaded by a serpentine river of silver—a far-flung river which lingered on its way, journeying hither and thither, making great curves as if it loved the wilderness and wished to know it well, to know all of it before being merged irrevocably with the sea.

"Those are the valleys of the Kladeos and the Alpheios."

"Yes."

"And that far-off Isle is the Island of Zante."

"Of Zante," she repeated.

After a long pause she said:

"You know those words somewhere in the Bible—'the wilderness and the solitary places'?"

"Yes."

"I've always loved them, just those words. Even when I was quite a child I liked to say them. And I remember once, when I was staying at Sherrington, we drove over to Welsley Cathedral. Canon Wilton took us into the stalls. It was a week-day and there were very few people. The anthem was Wesley's 'The Wilderness.' I had never heard it before, and when I heard those words—my words—being sung, I had such a queer thrill. I wanted to cry and I was startled. To most people, I suppose, the word wilderness suggests something dreary and parched, ugly desolation."

"Yes. The scapegoat was driven out into the wilderness."

"I think I'd rather take *my* sin into the wilderness than anywhere else. Purification might be found there."

"*Your* sin!" he said. "As if——" He was silent.

Zante seemed sleeping in the distance of the Ionian Sea, far away as the dream from which one has waked, touched with a dream's mystic remoteness. The great plain, stretching to mountains and sea, vast and green and lonely—but with the loneliness that smiles, desiring nothing else—seemed uninhabited. Perhaps there were men in it, labouring among the vineyards or toiling among the crops, women bending over the earth by which they lived, or washing clothes on the banks of the river. Rosamund did not look for them and did not see them. In the green landscape, over which from a distance the mountains kept their quiet and deeply reserved watch, she detected no movement. Even the silver of the river seemed immobile, as if its journeyings were now stilled by an afternoon spell.

"It's as empty as the plain of Marathon, but how much greater!" she said at last.

"At Marathon there was the child."

"Yes, and here there's not even a child."

She sighed.

"I wonder what one would learn to be if one lived on the hill of Drouva?" she said.

"It will be much more beautiful at sunset. We are looking due west. Soon we shall have the moon rising behind us."

"What memories I shall carry away!"

"And I."

"You were here before alone?"

"Yes. I walked up from the village just before sunset after a long day among the ruins. I—I didn't know then of your existence. That seems strange."

But she was gazing at the view, and now with an earnestness in which there seemed to him to be a hint of effort, as if she were, perhaps, urging imagination to take her away and to make her one with that on which she looked. It struck him just then that, since they had been married, she had changed a good deal, or developed. A new dreaminess had been added to her power and her buoyancy which, at times, made her very different from the radiant girl he had won.

"The Island of Zante!" she said once more, with a last look at the sea, as they turned away in answer to the grave summons of Achilles. "Ah, what those miss who never travel!"

"And yet I remember your saying once that you had very little of the nomad in you, and even something about the cat's instinct."

"Probably I meant the cat's instinct to say nasty things. Every woman——"

"No, what you meant——"

He began actually to explain, but her "Puss, Puss, Puss!" stopped him. Her dream was over, and her laugh rang out infectiously as they returned to the tent.

The tea was fairly bad, but she defended its merits with energy, and munched biscuits with an excellent appetite. Afterwards she smoked a cigarette and Dion his pipe, sitting on the ground and leaning against the tent wall. In vain Achilles drew her attention to the chairs. Rosamund stretched out her long limbs luxuriously and shook her head.

"I'm not a school-teacher, Achilles," she said.

And Dion had to explain what she meant perhaps—only perhaps, for he wasn't sure about it himself—to that classical personage.

"Those chairs fight against the whole thing," she said, when Achilles was gone.

"I'll hide them," said Dion.

He was up in a moment, caught hold of the chairs, gripping one in each hand, and marched off with them. When he came back Rosamund was no longer sitting on the ground by the tent wall. She had slipped away. He looked round. She must have gone beyond the brow of the hill, for she was not on the plateau. He hesitated, pulling hard at his pipe. He knew her curious independence, knew that sometimes she wanted to be alone. No doubt she had gone to look at the great view from some hidden place. Well, then, he ought not to try to find her, he ought to respect her wish to be by herself. But this evening it hurt him. As he stood there he felt wounded, for he remembered telling her that the great view would be much more beautiful at sunset when the moon would be rising behind them. The implication of course had been, "Wait a little and I'll show you." It was he who had chosen the place for the camp, he who had prepared the surprise. Perhaps foolishly, he had thought of the whole thing, even of the plain, the river, the mountains, the sea and the Island of Zante, as a sort of possession which he was going gloriously to share with her. And now——! He felt deprived, almost wronged. The sky was changing. He turned and looked to the east. Above Olympia, in a clear and tremulous sky, a great silver moon was rising. It was his hour, and she had hidden herself.

Again, at that moment, Dion felt almost afraid of his love.

His pipe had gone out. He took it from his lips, bent, and knocked out the tobacco against the heel of his boot. He was horribly disappointed, but he was not going to search for Rosamund; nor was he ever going to let her know of his disappointment. Perhaps by concealing it he would kill it. He thrust his pipe into his pocket, hesitated, then walked a little way from the camp and sat down on the side of the hill. What rot it was his always wanting to share everything now. Till he met Rosamund he had always thought only women could never be happy unless they shared their pleasures, and preferably with a man. Love apparently could play the very devil, bridge the gulf between sexes, make a man who

was thoroughly masculine in all his tastes and habits have "little feelings" which belonged properly only to women.

Doric! Suddenly the word jumped up in his mind, and a vision of the Parthenon columns rose before his imagination, sternly glorious, almost with the strength of a menace. He set his teeth together and cursed himself for a fool and a backslider.

Rosamund and he were to be Doric. Well, this evening he didn't know exactly what he was, but he certainly was not Doric.

Just then he heard the sound of a shot. He did not know what direction it came from, but, fantastically enough, it seemed to be a comment on his thought, a brusque, decisive exclamation flung at him from out of the silent evening. "Sentimentalist! Take that, and get out of your mush of feeling!" As he recognized it—he now forced himself to that sticking-point—to be a mush, the shot's comment fell in, of course, with his own view of the matter.

He sat still for a moment, thinking of the shot, and probably expecting it to be repeated. It was not repeated. A great silence prevailed, the silence of the Hellenic wild held in the hand of evening. And abruptly, perhaps from that large and pervasive silence, Dion caught a coldness of fear. All his perceptions rushed upon him, an acute crowd. He sprang up, put his hand to his revolver. Rosamund out alone somewhere in the loneliness of Greece—evening—a shot!

He was over the brow of the hill towards the west in a moment. All respect for Rosamund's evening whim, all remembrance of his own proper pride, was gone from him.

"Rosamund!" he called; "Rosamund!"

"Here!" replied her strong voice from somewhere a little way below him.

And he saw her standing on the hillside and looking downwards. He thrust his revolver back into his pocket quickly. Already his pride was pushing its head up again. He stood still, looking down on her.

"It's all right, is it?"

This time she lifted her head and turned her face up to him.

"All right?"

"I heard a shot."

He saw laughter dawning in her face.

"You don't mean to say——?"

She laughed frankly.

"Come down here!"

He joined her.

"What was it?"

"Did you, or didn't you, think I'd been attacked by Greek brigands?"

"Of course not! But I heard a shot, and it just struck me——"

At that moment he was almost ashamed of loving her so much.

"Well, there's the brigand, and I do believe he's going to shoot again. The ruffian! Yes, he's taking aim! Oh, Dion, let's seek cover."

Still laughing, she shrank against him. He put one arm round her shoulder brusquely, and his hand closed on her tightly. A little way below them, relieved with a strange and romantic distinctness against the evening light, in which now there was a strong suggestion of gold, was a small figure, straight, active—a figure of the open air and the wide spaces—with a gun to its right shoulder. A shot rang out.

"He's got it," said Rosamund.

And there was a note of admiring praise in her voice.

"That child's a dead shot," she added. "It's quail he's after, I believe. Look! He's picking it up."

The small black figure bent quickly down, after running forward a little way.

"He retrieves as well as he shoots. Shall we go to him and see whether it's quail?"

"Another child," said Dion.

He still had his arm round her shoulder.

"Why did you come here?" he asked.

"To look at the evening coming to me over the wilderness. But he made me forget it for a moment."

Dion was staring at her now.

"I believe a child could make you forget anything," he said.

"Let's go to him."

The gold of the evening was strengthening and deepening. The vast view, which was the background to the child's little figure, was losing its robe of green and of blue, green of the land, blue of the sea, was putting on velvety darkness and gold. The serpentine river was a long band of gold flung out, as if by a careless enchanter, towards the golden sea in which Zante was dreaming. Remote and immense

this land had seemed in the full daytime, a tremendous pastoral deserted by men, sufficient to itself and existing only for its own beauty. Now it existed for a child. The human element had caused nature, as it were, to recede, to take the second place. A child, bending down to pick up a shot quail, then straightening up victoriously, held the vast panorama in submission, as if he had quietly given out the order, "Make me significant." And Rosamund, who had stolen away to meet the evening, was now only intent on knowing whether the shot bird was a quail or not.

It was a quail, and a fat one.

When they came to the boy they found him a barefooted urchin, with tattered coarse clothes and densely thick, uncovered black hair growing down almost to his fiery young eyes, which stared at them proudly. There was a wild look in those eyes never to be found in the eyes of a dweller in cities, a wild grace in his figure, and a complete self-possession in his whole bearing. The quail just shot he had in his hand. Another was stuffed into the large pocket of his jacket. He pulled it out and showed it to them, reading at a glance the admiration in Rosamund's eyes. Dion held out a hand to the boy's gun, but at this his manner changed, he clutched it tightly, moved a step or two back, and scowled.

"He's a regular young savage," said Dion.

"I like him as he is. Besides, why should he give his gun to a stranger? He knows nothing about us."

"You're immense!" said Dion, laughing.

"Let's have the quail for our dinner."

"D'you expect him to give them to us without a stand-up fight and probably bloodshed? For he's armed, unfortunately!"

"Don't be ridiculous. Look here, Dion, you go off for a minute, and leave him with me. I think you get on his nerves."

"Well, I'm——!"

But he went. He left the two figures together, and presently saw them both from a distance against the vastness of the gold. Bushes and shrubs, and two or three giant pine trees, between the summit of Drouva and the plain, showed black, and the figures of woman and child were almost ebon. Dion watched them. He could not see any features. The two were now like carved things which could move, and only by their movements could they tell him anything. The gun over the boy's shoulder was like a

long finger pointing to the west where a redness was creeping among the gold. The great moon climbed above Drouva. Bluish-grey smoke came from the camp-fire at a little distance. It ascended without wavering straight up in the windless evening. Far down in the hidden valley, behind Dion and below the small village, shadows were stealing through quiet Elis, shadows were coming to shroud the secret that was held in the shrine of Olympia. A slight sound of bells stole up on the stillness from somewhere below, somewhere not far from those two ebon figures. And this sound, suggestive of moving animals coming from pasture to protected places for the night, put a heart in the breast of this pastoral. Thin was the sound and delicate, fit music for Greece in the fragile evening. As Dion listened to it, he looked at that black finger below him pointing to the redness in the west. Then he remembered it was a gun, and, for an instant, looking at the red, he thought of the colour of fresh blood.

At this moment the tall figure, Rosamund, took hold of the gun, and the two figures moved away slowly down the winding track in the hill, and were hidden at a turning of the path.

Almost directly a third shot rang out. The young dweller in the wilderness was allowing Rosamund to give a taste of her skill with the gun.

## CHAPTER VI

ROSAMUND came back to the camp that evening with Dirmikis,—so the boy of the wilderness was called,—and five quail, three of them to her gun. She was radiant, and indeed had an air almost of triumph. Her eyes were sparkling, her cheeks were glowing; she looked like a beautiful schoolgirl as she walked in over the plateau with the sunset flushing scarlet behind her, and the big moon coming to meet her. Dirmikis, at her side, carried the quail upside down in his brown hands. Rosamund had the gun under her right arm.

"It's a capital gun," she called out to Dion. "I got three. Here, Dirmikis,"—she turned to the boy,—"show them."

"Does he understand English?"

"No, but he understands me!" she retorted with pride. "Look there!"

Dirmikis held up the birds, smiling a savage smile.

"Aren't they fat? Feel them, Dion! The three fattest ones fell to my gun, but don't tell *him*."

She sketched a delicious wink, looking about sixteen.

"I really have a good eye," she added, praising herself with gusto. "It's no use being over-modest, is it? If one has a gift, well, one just has it. Here, Dirmikis!"

She gave his gun carefully to the barefooted child.

"He's a little stunner, and so chivalrous. I never met a boy I liked more. Do give him a nice present, Dion, and let him feed in the camp if he likes."

"Well, what next? What am I to give him?"

"Nothing dressy. He isn't a mannikin, he's a real Doric boy."

She slapped Dirmikis on the back with a generous hand. He smiled radiantly, this time without any savagery.

"The sort of boy who'll be of some use in the world."

"I'll give him a tip."

Rosamund seemed about to assent when an idea struck her, as she afterwards said, "with the force of a bomb."

"I know what he'll like better than anything."

"Well?"

"Your revolver, to be sure!"

"My revolver to be suren't!" exclaimed Dion passionately, inventing a negative. "I bought it at great cost to defend you with, not for the endowment of a half-naked varmint from the wilderness under Drouva."

"Be careful, Dion; you're insulting a Doric boy!"

"Here—I'll insult him with a ten-lepta piece."

"Don't be mean. Bribe him thoroughly if you're going to bribe him. We go shooting together again to-morrow evening."

"Do you indeed?"

"Yes, directly after tea. It's all arranged. Dirmikis suggested it with the most charming chivalry, and I gave yes for an answer. So we must keep on good terms with him at whatever cost."

She cocked up her chin and walked exultantly into the tent. A minute afterwards there rang out to the evening a warm contralto voice singing:

"Des anges, des anges, des anges,
Pour emporter dans l'ether
Les petits enfants étranges
Qui ne veulent pas rester."

Dirmikis looked at the tent and then at Dion with an air of profound astonishment. The quail dropped from his hands, and he did not even snatch at them as he listened to the remarkable sounds which, he could not doubt, flowed from his Amazon. His brows came down over his fiery eyes, and he seemed to stand at gaze like an animal, half-fascinated and half-suspicious. The voice died away and was followed by a sound of pouring water. Then Dirmikis accepted two ten-lepta pieces and picked up the quail. Dion introduced him to the cook, and it was understood that he should be fed in the camp, and that the quail should form part of the evening meal.

Very good they proved to be, cooked in leaves with the addition of some fried slices of fat ham. Rosamund exulted again as she ate them, recognizing the birds she had shot "by the taste."

"This is one! Aren't mine different from Dirmikis's?" she exclaimed. "So much more succulent!"

"Naturally, you great baby!"

"Life is glorious!" she exclaimed resonantly. "To eat one's own bag on the top of Drouva under the moon! Oh!"

She looked at the moon, then bent over her plate of metal-ware which was set on the tiny folding-table. In her joy she was exactly like a big child.

"I wonder how many I shall get to-morrow. I got my eye in at the very start. Really, Dion, you know, I'm a gifted creature. It isn't every one——"

And she ran on, laughing at herself, revelling in her whimsical pretence of conceit till dinner was over.

"Now a cigarette! Never have I enjoyed any meal so much as this! It's only out of doors that one gets hold of the real *joie de vivre*."

"You're never without it, thank God," returned Dion, striking a match for her.

So still was the evening that the flame burned steadily even upon that height facing immensities. Rosamund leaned to it with the cigarette between her lips. Her face was browned by the sun. She looked rather like a splendid blonde gipsy, with loose yellow hair and the careless eyes of those who dwell under smiling heavens. She sent out a puff of cigarette smoke, directing it with ardour to the moon which now rode high above them.

"I'd like to catch up nature in my arms to-night," she said. "Come, Dion, let's go a little way."

She was up, and put her arm through his like a comrade. He squeezed her arm against his side and, strolling there in the night on the edge of the hill, she talked at first with almost tumultuous energy, with an energy as of an Amazon who cared for the things of the soul as much as for the things of the body. To-night her body and soul seemed on the same high level of intensity.

At first she talked of the present, of their life in Greece and of what it had meant to her, what it had done for her; and then, always with her arm through Dion's, she began to talk of the future.

"We've got to go away from all this, but let us carry it with us; you know, as one can carry things that one has really gathered up, really got hold of. It will mean a lot to us afterwards in England, in our regular humdrum life. Not that life's ever humdrum. We must take Drouva to England, and Marathon, and the view from the Acropolis, and the columns of the Parthenon above all those, and the tombs."

"But they're sad."

"We must take them. I'm quite sure the way to make life splendid, noble, what it is meant to be to each of us, is to press close against one's heart all that is sent to one, the sorrows as well as the joys. Everything one tries to keep at arm's length hurts one."

"Sins?"

"Sins, Dion? I said what is sent to us."

"Don't you think——?"

"Sins are never sent to us, we always have to go and fetch them. It's like that poor old chemist going round the corner in the fog with a jug for what is ruining his life."

"What poor old chemist?" he asked.

"A great friend of mine in London—Mr. Thrush. You shall know him some day. Oh—but London! Now, Dion, can we, you and I, live perpetually in London after all this?"

"Well, dearest, I must stick close to business."

"I know that. And we've got the little house. But later on?"

"And your singing, your travelling all over the place with a maid!"

"I wonder if I shall. To-night I don't feel as if I shall."

She stood still abruptly, and was silent for a minute.

"Don't you think," she said, in a different and less exuberant voice, and with a changed and less physical manner—"don't you think sometimes, in exceptional

hours, one can feel what is to come, what is laid up for one? I do. This is an exceptional hour. We are on the heights and it's very wonderful. Well, perhaps to-night we can feel what is coming. Let's try."

"How?"

"Let's just be quiet, and give ourselves up to the hill of Drouva, and Greece, and the night, and—and what surrounds and permeates us and all this."

With a big and noble gesture she indicated the sleeping world far below them, breathless under the moon; the imperceptible valleys merged in the great plain through which the river, silver once more, moved unsleeping between its low-lying banks to the sea; the ranges of mountains which held themselves apart in the night, a great company, reserved and almost austere, yet trodden with confidence by the feet of those fairies who haunt the ancient lands; the sea which drew down the moon as a lover draws down his mistress; Zante riding the sea like a shadow in harbour.

And they were silent. Dion had a sensation of consciously giving himself, almost as a bather, to the sea. Did he feel what was coming to him and to this girl at his side, who was part of him, and yet who was alone, whose arm clasped his, yet whose soul dwelt far off in its own remoteness? Would the years draw them closer and closer together, knit them together, through greater knowledge, through custom, through shared joys and griefs, through common beliefs, through children, till they were as branches growing out of one stem firmly rooted?

He gave himself and gave himself, or tried to give himself, in the silence. Yet he could not have said truly that any mystical knowledge came to him. Only one thing he seemed strangely to know, that they would never have children. The sleeping world and the sea, and, as Rosamund had said, "what surrounds and permeates us and all this" seemed to permit him mysteriously to get at that one bit of foreknowledge. Something seemed to say to him, "You will be the father of one child." And yet, when he came to think of it, he realized how probable, how indeed almost certain it was that the silent voice issued from within himself. Rosamund and he had talked about a child, a boy, had begun almost to sketch out mental plans for that boy's upbringing; they had never talked about children. He believed that he had penetrated to the secret of the voice. He said to himself, "All that sort of thing comes out of one's self. It doesn't

reach one from the outside." And yet, when he looked out over the world, which seemed wrapped in ethereal garments, garments woven by spirit on looms no hand of woman or man might ever touch, he was vaguely conscious that all within himself which was of any real value was there too. Surely he did not possess. Rather was he possessed of.

He looked at Rosamund at last.

"Have you got anything?"

But she did not answer him. There was a great stillness in her big eyes. All the vital exuberance of body and spirit mingled together had vanished from her abruptly. Nothing of the Amazon who had captured the heart of Dirmikis remained. As Dion looked at her now, he simply could not see the beautiful schoolgirl of sixteen, the blonde gipsy who had bent forward, cigarette in mouth, to his match, who had leaned back and blown rings to the moon above Drouva. Had she ever set the butt of a gun against her shoulder? Something in this woman's eyes made him suddenly feel as if he ought to leave her alone. Yet her arm still lay on his, and she was his.

Against the silver of the moon the twisted trunks of the two small olive trees showed black and significant. The red of the dying camp-fire glowed not far from the tent. Dogs were barking in the hamlet of Drouva. She neither saw details nor heard ugly sounds in the night. He knew that. And the rest? It seemed to him that something of her, the spirit of her, perhaps, or some part of it with which his had never yet had any close contact, was awake and at work in the night. But though he held her arm in his she was a long way from him. And there came to him this thought:

"I felt as if I ought to leave her alone. But she has left me alone."

Almost mechanically, and slowly, he straightened his arm, thus letting hers slip. She did not seem to notice his action. She gazed out towards Zante over a world that now looked very mystical. In the daylight it had been a green pastoral. Now there was over it, and even surely in it, a dim whiteness, a something pure and hushed, like the sound, remote and curiously final, of a quiet sleeper.

That night, when they went to bed, Rosamund was full of the delight of a new experience. She insisted that the flap of the tent should not be kept shut down. She had never slept in a tent before, and was resolved to look out and see the stars from her pillow.

" And my olive tree," she added.

Obediently, as soon as she was in her camp-bed, Dion lifted the flap. A candle was still burning, set on a chair between the two beds. As the moonlight came in, Rosamund, lifting herself on one arm, leaned over and blew it out.

" How horrible moonlight makes candlelight," she said.

Dion, in his pyjamas, was outside fastening back the flap, his bare feet on the short dry grass.

" I can see the Pleiades ! " she added earnestly.

" There ! " said Dion.

He looked up at the sky.

" The Pleiades, the Great Bear, Mars."

" Oh ! " she drew in her breath. " A shooting star ! "

She pressed her lips together and half-shut her eyes. By her contracted forehead Dion saw that she was wishing almost fiercely. He believed he read her wish. He had not seen the travelling star, and did not try to wish with her, lest he should cross the path of the Fates and throw his shadow on her desire.

He came softly into the tent which was full of the whiteness of the moon. Sleeping thus with Rosamund in the bosom of nature was very wonderful to him. It was like a sort of re-marriage. The moon and the stars looking in made his relation to her quite new and more beautiful.

" I shall never forget Olympia," he whispered, leaning over her.

He kissed her very gently, not with any passion. He had the feeling that she would almost resent passion just then.

He got into his bed and lay with his arm crooked, his cheek in his hand. Part of the Milky Way was visible to him, that dust of little stars powdering the deep of the sky. If he, too, should see a falling star to-night, dropping down towards the hidden sea, vanishing below the line of the hill ! Would he echo her wish ?

" Are you sleepy, Rosamund ? " he asked presently.

" No. I don't want to sleep. It would make me miss all the stars."

" And if you're tired to-morrow ? "

" I shan't be. I shan't be tired while we are in camp. I should like never to go to bed in a room again. I should like always to dwell in the wilderness."

He longed for the addition of just two words. They did not come. But of course they were to be understood. There is no need to state things known. The fact that

she had let him bring her to the wilderness was enough. The last words he heard Rosamund say that night were these, almost whispered slowly to herself and to the stars:

"The wilderness—and—the solitary places."

Very early in the morning she awoke while Dion was sleeping. She slipped softly out of the little camp-bed, wrapped a cloak around her, and went out to gaze at the dawn.

When they sat at breakfast she said:

"And now are you going to tell me the secret?"

"No. I'm going to let you find it out for yourself."

"But if I can't?"

"You will."

They set off, about ten, down the hill on foot. The morning was very still and already very hot. As they descended towards the basin in which lies Olympia, heat ascended to meet them and to give them a welcome—a soft and almost enticing heat like a breath from some green fastness where strange marvels were secluded.

"Elis even smells remote," Rosamund said.

"Are you sorry to leave the hill-top?" he asked.

"I was, but already I'm beginning to feel drawn on. There's something here—what is it?"

She looked at him.

"Something for you."

"Specially for me?"

"Specially for you."

"Hidden in the folds of the green. Where are we going first?"

"To the ruins."

He was carrying their lunch in a straw pannier slung over his shoulder.

"We'll lunch in the house of Nero, and rest there."

"That sounds rather dreadful, Dion."

"Wait till you see it."

"I can't imagine that monster in Elis."

"He was a very artistic monster, you remember."

"Like some of the decadents in London. Why is it that those who hate moral beauty so often worship all the other beauties?"

"D'you think in their hearts they actually hate moral beauty?"

"Well, despise it, laugh at it, try to tarnish it."

"Paganism!"

"Do I ever strike you as goody-goody?"

"Good heavens, no!"

"And they both laughed as they went down the narrow path to the soft green valley that awaited them, hushed in the breathless morning, withdrawn among the hills, holding its memories of the athletic triumphs of past ages. Near the Museum they stopped for a moment to look down on the valley.

"Is the Hermes in there?" Rosamund asked, glancing at the closed and deserted building.

"Yes."

"What a strange and delicious home for him."

"You shall visit him presently. There are jackals in this valley."

"I didn't hear any last night."

She looked again at the closed door of the Museum.

"When do they open it?"

"Probably the guardian's in there. That's where he lives."

He pointed to a small dwelling close to the Museum. Just then a tiny murmur of some far-away wind stirred the umbrella pines which stood sentinel over the valley.

"Oh, Dion, what an exquisite sound!" she said.

She held up one hand like a listening child. There was awe in her eyes.

"This is a shrine," she said, when the murmur failed. "Dion, I know you planned to go first to the ruins."

"Yes. They're just below us. Look—by the river!"

"Let me see the Hermes first, just for a moment."

Their eyes met. He thought she was reading his mind, though he tried to keep it closed against her just then.

"Why are you in such a hurry?" he asked.

"I feel I must see it," she answered, with a sort of sweet obstinacy.

He hesitated.

"Well, then—I'll see if I can find the guardian."

In a moment he came back with a smiling Greek who was holding a key. As the man went to open the door, Dion said:

"Rose, will you follow my directions?"

"When?"

"Now, when you go into the Museum."

"But aren't you coming too?"

"Not now. I will when we've seen the ruins. When you go into the Museum go straight through the vestibule where

the Roman Emperors are. Don't turn to the right. In front of you you'll see a hall with a wooden roof and red walls. The 'Victory' is there. But don't stay there. Go into the small room beyond, the last room, and you mustn't let the guardian go with you."

From behind came the sound of the big door being opened.

"Then that is the secret, and I knew about it all the time!"

"Knew about it—yes."

She looked down on the green cup surrounded by hills, with its little river where now two half-naked men were dragging with a hand-net for fish. Again the tiny breath from the far-away wind stirred in the pine trees, evoking soft sounds of Eternity. She turned away and went into the Museum.

Left alone, Dion lifted the lunch-pannier from his shoulder and laid it down on the ground. Then he sat down under one of the pine trees. A wild olive grew very near it. He thought of the crown of wild olive which the victors received in days when the valley resounded with voices and the trampling of the feet of horses. He took off his hat and laid it beside him on the ground by the lunch-pannier. One of the men in the river cried out to his companion. Sheep-bells sounded softly down the valley. Some peasants went by with a small train of donkeys on a path which wound away at the foot of the hill of Kronos.

Dion was being unselfish. In staying where he was, beyond the outer door of the house of the Hermes, he was taking the first firm step on a path which might lead him on very far. He had slept in the dawn when Rosamund slipped out of the tent, but till the stars waned he had been awake, and in the white light of the moon he had seen the beginning of the path. Men were said to be selfish. People, especially women, often talked as if selfishness were bred in the very fibre of men, as if it were ineradicable, and must be accepted by women. He meant to prove to one woman that even a man could be unselfish, moved by something greater than himself. Up there on Drouva he had definitely dedicated himself to Rosamund. His acute pain when, coming back to the place where he had left her by the tent before sunset, he had not found her, his sense almost of a smouldering anger, had startled him. In the night he had thought things over, and then he had come to the beginning of the path. A really great love, if it is to be worthy to carry the torch, must

tread in the way of unselfishness. He would conform to the needs, doubtless imperious, of Rosamund's nature, even when they conflicted with his.

So now he sat outside under the pine tree, and she was within alone. A first step was taken on the path.

Would she presently come through the hall of the Victory to call him in ?

He heard the guardian cough in the vestibule of the Emperors ; the cough was that of a man securely alone with his bodily manifestations. The train of peasants had vanished. Still the sheep-bells sounded, but the chime seemed to come to him now from a greater distance.

The morning was wearing on. When would she come back to him from the secret of Olympia ?

He heard again above his head the eternities whispering in the pine branches. The calmness and heat of the valley mingled together, and rose to him, and wanted to take him to themselves. But he was detached from them, terribly detached by his virtue—his virtue, which involved him in a struggle, pushed them off.

Surely an hour had passed, perhaps even more. He began to tingle with impatience. The sound of the sheep-bells had died away beyond the colonnade of the echoes. A living silence was now about him.

At last he put on his hat and got up. The Hermes was proving his power too mercilessly, was stealing the hours like a thief at work in the dark. The knowledge that Rosamund was his own for life did not help Dion at all at this moment. He had planned out this day as if they were never to have another. Their time in Greece was nearly over, and they could not linger for very long anywhere. Anyhow, just this day, once gone, could never be recaptured.

He looked towards the doorway of the Museum, hesitating. He was devoured by impatience. Nevertheless he did not wish to step out of that path, the beginning of which he had seen in the night. Determined not to seek Rosamund, yet driven by restlessness, he did one of those meaningless things which, bringing hurt to nature, are expected by man to bring him at least a momentary solace. His eyes happened to rest on the olive tree which stood not far from the Museum. One branch of it was stretched out beyond the others. He walked up to the tree, pulled at the branch, and finally snapped it off, stripped it of its leaves and threw it on the ground.

As he finished this stupid and useless act, Rosamund came out of the Museum, looking almost angry.

"Oh, Dion, was it you?" she said. "What could make you do such a thing?"

"But—what do you mean?" he asked.

She looked down at the massacred branch at his feet.

"A branch of wild olive! If you only knew how it hurt me."

"Oh—that! But how could you know?"

She still looked at him with a sort of shining of anger in her eyes.

"I saw from the room of the Hermes. The doorway of the Museum is the frame for such a picture of Elis! It's almost, in its way, as dream-like and lovely as the distant country one sees through the temple door in Raphael's 'Marriage of the Virgin' in Milan. And hanging partly across it was that branch of wild olive. I was looking at it and loving it in the room of the Hermes when a man's arm, your arm, was thrust into the picture, and the poor branch was torn away."

She had spoken quite excitedly, still evidently under the impulse of something like anger. Now she suddenly pulled herself up with a little forced laugh.

"Of course you didn't know; you couldn't. I suppose I was dreaming, and it—it looked like a sort of murder. But still I don't see why you should tear the branch off, and all the leaves too."

"I'm sorry, I'm very sorry, Rosamund. It was idiotic. Of course I hadn't an idea what you were doing, I mean, that you were looking at it. One does senseless little things sometimes."

"It looked so angry."

"What did?"

"Your hand, your arm. You can have no idea how——"

She broke off again.

"Let me come in with you. Let's go to the Hermes."

"Oh no, not now."

She spoke with almost brusque decision.

"Very well, then, I'll just pay the man something, and we'll be off to the ruins."

"Yes."

Dion went to pay the guardian, whom he found standing up among the Roman Emperors in a dignified and receptive attitude. When he came back he picked up the lunch-basket,

slung it over his shoulder, and they walked down the small hill and towards the ruins in silence. He felt involved in a tragedy, pained and discomforted. Yet it was all rather absurd, too. He did not know what to say, how to take it, and he looked straight ahead, seeking instinctively for some diversion. When they were on the river bank he found it in the fishermen who were wading in the shallows with their nets.

"I wonder what they catch here," he said. "There's not much water."

Rosamund took up the remark with her usual readiness and sympathetic cordiality, and soon they were chattering again much as usual.

The great heat of the hour after noontide found them lunching among the ruins of Nero's house. By this time the spell of the place had fast hold of them both. Nature had long since taken the ruins to her gentle breast ; she took Rosamund and Dion with them. In her green lap she sheltered them ; with her green hills and her groves of pine trees she wrapped them round ; with her tall grasses, her bushes, her wild flowers and her leaves she caught at and caressed them. A jackal whined in its lair near the huge limestone blocks of the temple of Zeus. Green lizards basked on pavements which still showed the little ruts constructed to save the feet of contending athletes from slipping. All along the green valley the birds flew and sang ; blackberry bushes climbed over the broken walls of the mansion of Nero, and red and white daisies and silvery grasses grew in every cranny where the kindly earth found a foothold.

"Look at those butterflies, Dion !" Rosamund said.

Two snow-white butterflies, wandering among the ruins, had found their way to the house of Nero, and seemed inclined to make it their home. Keeping close together, as if guided by some sweet and whimsical purpose, they flew from stone to stone, from daisy to daisy, often alighting, as if bent on a thorough investigation of this ancient precinct, then fluttering forward again, with quivering wings, not quite satisfied, in an airy search for the thing or the place desired. Several times they seemed about to abandon the ruins of Nero's house, but, though they fluttered away, they always returned. And at last they alighted side by side on a piece of uneven wall, and rested, as if asleep in the sun, with folded wings.

"That's the finishing touch," said Rosamund. "White butterflies asleep in the house of Nero."

She looked round over the ruins, poetic and beautiful in

their prostration, as if they had fallen to kiss the vale which, in return, had folded them in an eternal embrace.

"Don't take me to Delphi this time, Dion; don't take me anywhere else," she said.

"I was thinking only to-day that our time's very short now. We lingered so long in Athens."

"We'll say our good-bye to Greece from the Acropolis. That's—of course! The grandeur and wonder are there. But the dream of Greece—that's here. This is a shrine."

"For Pan?"

"Oh no, not for Pan, though I dare say he often comes here."

From the Kronos Hill, covered with little pines, came the mystical voice of the breeze, speaking to them in long and remote murmurs.

"That's the most exquisite sound in the world," Rosamund continued. "But it has nothing to do with Pan. You remember that day we went into the Russian church in Athens, Dion?"

"Yes."

"There was the same sort of sound in those Russian voices when they were singing very softly. It could never come from a Pagan world."

"You find belief behind it?"

"No—knowledge."

He did not ask her to define exactly what she meant. It was not an hour for definition, but for dreaming, and he was happy again; the cloud of the morning had passed away; he had his love with untroubled eyes among the ruins. Thinking of that, realizing that with a sudden intensity, he took her warm hand from the warm stone on which it was resting, and held it closely in his.

"Oh, Rosamund, shall I ever have another hour as happy as this?" he said.

A little way off, in that long meadow in the breast of which the Stadium lay hidden, the sheep-bells sounded almost pathetically; a flock was there happily at pasture.

"It's as if all the green doors were closing upon us to keep us in Elis for ever, isn't it?" she said. "But——"

She looked at him with a sort of smiling reproach:

"You wouldn't be allowed to stay."

"Why not?"

"You committed a crime this morning. Nature's taken possession of Olympia, and you struck at her,"

"D'you know why I did that?"

"No."

But she did not again ask him why, and he never told her. When the heat had lessened a little, they wandered once more through that garden of ruins, where scarcely a column is standing, where convulsions of nature have helped the hands of man to overthrow man's work, and where nature has healed every wound, and made every scar tender and beautiful. And presently Rosamund said:

"I want to know exactly where the Hermes was found."

"Come, and I'll show you."

He led her on among the wild flowers and the grasses, till they came to the clearly marked base of the Heræon, the most ancient known temple of Greece. Two of its columns were standing, tremendously massive Doric columns of a warm golden-brown colour.

"The Hermes was found in this temple. It stood between two of the columns, but I believe it was lying down when it was found."

"It's difficult to imagine him between such columns as these."

"Yet you love Doric."

"Yes, but I don't know——"

She looked at the columns, even put her hands on them as if trying to clasp them.

"It must have been right. The Greeks knew. Strength and grace, power and delicacy, that's the bodily ideal. So the Hermes stood actually here."

She looked all round, she listened to the distant sheep-bells, she drew into her nostrils the green scents of the valley.

"And left his influence here for ever," she added. "His quiet influence."

"Let me come to see him with you on the way home."

And this time she said, "Yes."

At a little after four they left the sweet valley, and, passing over the river, ascended the hill to the Museum. The door was open, and the guardian was sitting profoundly asleep in the vestibule of the Emperors.

"You see, that's the picture-frame," Rosamund whispered, when they were inside, pointing to the doorway. "The branch came just there in my picture."

She had lifted her hand. He took her by the wrist and gently pulled her hand down.

"You mustn't show me that."

"Don't let us wake him."

A fly buzzed outside on the sunny threshold of the door, making a sleepy sound like the winding of a rustic horn in the golden stillness, as they went forward on tiptoe between the dull red walls of the hall of the Victory, and came into the room beyond, where the Hermes stood alone but for the little Dionysos on his arm.

There a greater silence seemed to reign—the silence of the harmony which lies beyond music, as a blue background of the atmosphere lies beyond the verges of the vastest stretch of land that man's eyes have power to see; he sees the blue, but almost as if with his soul, and in like manner hears the harmony. Both Rosamund and Dion felt the difference in the silence directly they entered that sacred room.

There was no room beyond it. Not very large, it was lighted by three windows set in a row under a handsome roof of wood. The walls were dull red like the walls in the hall of the Victory. On the mosaic pavement were placed two chairs. Rosamund went straight up to one of them, and sat down in front of the statue, which was raised on a high pedestal, and set facing the right-hand wall of the chamber. Dion remained standing a little way behind her.

He remembered quite well his first visit to Olympia, his first sight of the Hermes. He had realized then very clearly the tragedy of large Museums in which statues stand together in throngs, enclosed within roaring cities. From its situation, hidden in the green breast of this valley in Elis, the Hermes seemed to receive a sort of consecration, a blessing from its shrine; and the valley received surely from the Hermes a gracious benediction, making it unlike any other valley, however beautiful, in any land of the earth. Nowhere else could the Hermes have been so serenely tender, so exquisitely benign in its contemplation; and no other valley could have kept it safe with such gentle watchfulness, such tranquilly unwearied patience. Surely each loved the other, and so each gained something from the other.

Through all the months since his visit, Dion had remembered the unique quality of the peace of Olympia, like no other peace, and the strange and exquisite hush which greeted the pilgrim at the threshold of the chamber in which the Hermes stood. He had remembered, but now he felt. Again the silence seemed to come out of the marble to greet

him, a remembered pilgrim who had returned to his worship bringing another pilgrim. He entered once more into the peace of the Hermes, and now Rosamund shared that peace. As he looked at her for a moment, he knew he had made a complete atonement ; he had sent the shadow away.

How could any shadow stand in the presence of the Hermes ? The divine calm within this chamber had a power which was akin to the power of nature in the twilight of a windless evening, or of a beautiful soul at ease in its own simplicity. It purified. Dion could not imagine any man being able to look at the Hermes and feel the attraction of sin. Rosamund was right, he thought. Surely men have to go and fetch their sins. Their goodness is given to them. The mother holds it, and is aware of it, when her baby is put into her arms for the first time.

For a long while these two watched Hermes and the child in the silence of Elis, bound together by an almost perfect sympathy. And they understood as never before the beauty of calm—calm of the nerves, calm of the body, calm of the mind, the heart and the soul ; peace physical, intellectual and moral. In looking at the Hermes they saw, or seemed to themselves to see, the goal, what struggling humanity is meant for—the perfect poise, all faculties under effortless control, and so peace.

" We must be meant for that, we are meant for that," Dion said to himself. " Shall we reach that goal, and take a child with us ? "

Then he looked down at Rosamund, saw her pale yellow hair, the back of her neck, in which, somehow, purity was manifested, and thought :

" I might perhaps get there through her, but only through her."

She turned round, looked at him and smiled.

" Isn't he divine ? And the child's attitude ! "

Dion moved and sat down beside her.

" If this is Paganism," she continued, " it's the same thing as Christianity. It's what God means. Men try to separate things that are all one. I feel that when I look at Hermes. Oh, how beautiful he is ! And his beauty is as much moral as physical. You know the Antinous mouth ? "

" Of course."

" Look at his mouth. Could anyone, comparing the two, honestly say that purity doesn't shine like a light in darkness ? Aren't those lips stamped with the Divine seal ? "

"Yes, they are."

"Dion, I'm so thankful I have a husband who's kept the power to see that even physical beauty must have moral beauty behind it to be perfect. Many men can't see that, I think."

"Is it their fault ?"

"Yes."

After another long silence she said :

"Spirit really is everything. Hermes tells me that almost as plainly as the New Testament. Lots of people we know in London would laugh at me for saying so, the people who talk of 'being Greek' and who never can be Greek. And he stood between Doric columns. I'm trying to learn something here."

"What ?"

"How to bring *him* up if he ever comes."

Dion felt for her hand.

They stayed on for a week at Drouva. Each evening Rosamund shot with the boy of the wilderness, and they ate any birds that fell, at their evening meal. The nights were given to the stars till sleep came. And all the days were dedicated to Hermes, the child, and the sweet green valley which served as a casket for the perfect jewel which the earth had given up after centuries of possession. Since Rosamund had told the dear secret of her heart, what she was trying to learn, Dion was able to see her go in alone to the inner chamber without any secret jealousy or any impatience. The given confidence had done its blessed work swiftly and surely ; the spring behind the action, revealed so simply, was respected, was almost loved by Dion. Often he sat among the ruins alone, smoking his pipe ; or he wandered away after the call of the sheep-bells, passing between the ruined walls overgrown with brambles and grasses and mosses, shaded here and there by a solitary tree, and under the low arch of the Athletes' entrance into the great green space where the contests had been held. Here he found the wearers of music feeding peacefully, attended by a dreaming boy. With the Two in the Garden of Eden there were happy animals. The sheep-bells ringing tranquilly in his ears made Eden more real to him, and also more like something in one of the happy dreams of a man.

A world that had risen to great heights of emotion in this valley was dead, but that did not sadden him. He found

it impossible to be sad in Olympia, because his own life was so happy.

A delicious egoism, the birthright of his youth, had him safe in its grasp. But sometimes, when Rosamund was alone in the room of the Hermes, learning her lesson, and he was among the ruins, or walking above the buried Stadium where the flocks were at pasture, he recalled the great contests of the Athletes of ancient Greece; the foot-races which were the original competitions at the games, the races in armour, the long jumps, the wrestling matches, the discus and dart-throwing, the boxing and the brutal *pankration*. And he remembered that at the Olympic Games there were races for boys, for quite young boys. A boy had won at Olympia who was only twelve years old. When Dion recalled that fact one golden afternoon, it seemed to him that perhaps his lesson was to be learnt among the feeding sheep in the valley, rather even than on the hill where the Hermes dwelt. The father surely shapes one part of the sacred clay of youth, while on the other part, with a greater softness, a perhaps subtler care, the mother works.

He would try to make his boy sturdy and strong and courageous, swift to the race of life; he would train his boy to be a victor, to be a boy champion among other boys. Her son must not fail to win the crown of wild olive. And when he was a man——! But at that point in his dreams of the future Dion always pulled up. He could not see Rosamund as the mother of a man, could not see Rosamund old. She would, of course, be beautiful in old age, with a perhaps more spiritual beauty than she had even now. He shut his eyes, tried to imagine her, to see her before him with snow-white hair, a face perhaps etherialized by knowledge of life and suffering; once he even called up the most perfect picture of old age he knew of—the portrait of Whistler's mother, calm, dignified, gentle, at peace, with folded hands; but his efforts were in vain; he simply could not see his Rosamund old. And so, because of that, he could only see their child as a very young boy, wearing a boy's crown of wild olive, such as had once been won by the boy of twelve in the games at Olympia.

The last day of their visit to the green wilds and the hill-tops dawned, still, cloudless and very hot. There was a light haze over Zante, and the great plain held a look of sleep—not the sleep of night but of the siesta, when the dreams come out of the sun, and descend through the deep-blue corridors

to visit those who are weary in the gold. Rosamund, bare-headed, stood on the hill of Drouva and gazed towards the sea; her arm was round her olive tree; she looked marvellously well, lithe and strong, but her face was grave, held even a hint of sadness.

"Our last day here!" she said to Dion. "One more night with the stars, only one! Dion, when you brought me here, you did a dangerous thing."

"Gave you opportunities for regret? D'you mean that?"

She nodded, still gazing towards Zante.

"Such opportunities!"

"It couldn't be helped. I had to bring you."

"Of course. I know. If you had let me leave Greece without coming here, and I had ever come to understand what I had missed, I don't believe I could have forgiven even you."

"I always meant to bring you here."

"But you had a sudden impulse, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"Why exactly did it come?"

He hesitated. Suddenly he felt reserved; but he broke through his reserve and answered:

"I saw I had made you feel sad."

"Did you? Why was it?"

"Don't you remember?"

She was catching the dream of the plain, perhaps, for she replied, with an almost preoccupied air:

"I don't think so."

"I wanted to make you happy again, very happy, to give you a treat as quickly as possible. The idea of this"—he flung out a brown hand—"came to me suddenly. That's how it was. You—you don't know how I wish to keep every breath of sorrow out of your life."

"I know you do; I feel it. But you've put a sorrow in."

She spoke with a half-whimsical smile.

"Have I?"

"The sorrow of leaving all this, of leaving the Hermes. I didn't know it was possible to grow to care for a lifeless thing as I care for him. Sometimes I believe the marble has actually retained something of the beautiful mind and soul of Praxiteles. I know nothing of Praxiteles as a man. I mean as apart from a sculptor. But he must have been full of almost divine feelings and conceptions, or he could never

have made my Hermes. No man can make the divine without having divinity in him. I've learnt more here in these few days than I have learnt in all my years."

"From the statue of a Pagan. Isn't that strange?"

"No, I don't think so. For I was able to see the Christianity in it. I know what Praxiteles was only able to feel mysteriously. Sometimes in London I've heard people—you know the sort of people I mean—regretting they didn't live in the old Greek world."

"I've regretted that."

"Have you? But not in their way. When I look at the Hermes I feel very thankful I have lived since."

"Tell me just why."

"Because I live in a world which has received definitely and finally the message the Hermes knew before it was sent down."

She took away her arm from the olive tree and sighed.

"Oh, Dion, I shall hate going away, leaving the tent and Drouva and him. But I believe whenever I think of Olympia I shall feel the peace that, thank God, doesn't pass all understanding."

They went down to the valley that day to pay their final visit to the Hermes. Twilight had not yet come, but was not very far off when, for the last time, they crossed the threshold of his chamber. More silent than ever, more benignly silent, did the hush about him seem to Dion; more profound were his peace and serenity. He and the child had surely withdrawn a little farther from all that was not intended, but that, for some inscrutable reason, had come to be. His winged sandals had carried him still farther away. As Dion looked at him he seemed to be afar.

"Rosamund!"

"Yes?"

"This evening I have a feeling about the Hermes I've never had before."

"What is it?"

"That he's taking the child away, quite away."

"But he's always been here, and not here. That's what I love so much."

"I don't mean quite that. It's as if he were taking the child farther and farther away, partly because of us."

"I don't like that. I don't feel that at all."

"We belong to this world, you see, and are subject to all its conditions. We are in it and of it."

"Well?"

"He belongs to such a different world."

"Yes, the released world, where no ugly passions can ever get in."

"The way he looks at Dionysos tells one that. He hasn't any fear for the boy's future when he grows up and comes to know things. It just strikes me that no human being who thinks could ever look at a human child like that. There would always be the fear behind—'What is life going to do to the child?'"

She looked at him, and her face was very grave.

"D'you think we should feel that?"

"Surely."

"Unless we got the serene courage of the Hermes."

"But he lived among gods, and we live among men."

"Not always."

"I don't understand."

"Perhaps some day you will," she answered.

Into her eyes there had come a strange look of withdrawal.

At that moment the atmosphere in the room of the Hermes seemed to Dion more full of peace even than before, but the peace was like something almost tangible. It troubled him a little because he felt that the Hermes, the child and Rosamund were of it, while he was not. They were surrounded by the atmosphere necessary to them, and to which they were mysteriously accustomed, while he was for the first time in such an atmosphere. He felt separated from Rosamund by a gulf, perhaps very narrow, but probably very deep.

Over Elis the twilight was falling, a green twilight sylvan and very ethereal, tremulous in its delicate beauty. It stole through the green doors, and down through the murmuring pine trees; it crossed the shallow river, and made its way to the garden of ruins where once the Hermes had stood between Doric columns in the Heræon. Through the colonnade of the echoes it passed, and under the arch of the Athletes. Over the crude and almost terrible strength of the ruins of the temple of Zeus it let its green garments trail down, as it felt its way softly but surely to the buried Stadium where once a boy of twelve had won the crown of wild olive. The sheep-bells were ringing softly; the flocks were going homeward from pasture. They were making their way up the valley now at the base of the Kronos Hill, and the chime of their little bells mingled with the wide whispering of the eternities among the summits of the pine trees. Music of

earth mingled with the music from a distance that knew what the twilight knew.

The tall oblong of the Museum doorway on the hill framed a tiny picture of Elis, bathed in green and tremulous light : a small section of a hillside, a fragment of empty, poetic country—Pan's world rather hinted at than revealed—a suggestion of evening sky, remote, with infinity lost in its distance. But there was no branch of wild olive flickering across the picture.

Rosamund missed it as she looked from the room of the Hermes out to the whispering evening and the quiet vale of Olympia. But she did not say so to Dion. He thought of it too, as he looked with her, and he tried to forget it. The picture framed by the doorway strangely grew dimmer and yet more full of greenish light ; the country of Pan was fading in light. Presently details were entirely lost. Only an oblong of green, now almost emerald, light showed from the chamber of the Hermes. And in that chamber the two marble figures were gradually fading ; the athletic, yet miraculously graceful, messenger of the gods with the winged sandals, the tiny child clinging to his shoulder with one little arm stretched out in an enchanting gesture of desire. Still the child nestled against Hermes, and still Hermes contemplated the child, with a celestial benignity, a half-smiling calmness of other worlds than this.

In the vestibule of the Emperors the guardian waited patiently. He was not accustomed to visitors who lingered on like these two English, when the light was failing, and surely it must be difficult, if not impossible, to see the statues properly. But Rosamund, with her usual lack of all effort, had captivated him. He had grown accustomed to her visits ; he was even flattered by them. It pleased him subtly to have in his care a treasure such as the Hermes, to see which beautiful women, the Rosamunds of the world, travelled from far-off countries. Rosamund's perpetual, and prolonged, visits had made him feel more important than he had ever succeeded in feeling before. Let the night come, she might stay on there, if she chose. He took very little account of Dion. But Rosamund was beginning to assume a certain vital importance in his quiet life.

The green light faded into a very dim primrose ; the music of the sheep-bells drew near and died away among the small houses of the hamlet at the foot of the hill of Drouva ; Elis withdrew itself into the obscurity that would last till the late

coming of the waning moon. Of Hermes and Dionysos now only the attitudes could be seen faintly. But even they told of a golden age, an age from which everything ugly, everything violent, everything unseemly, everything insincere, everything cruel was blotted out—an age of serenity of body and soul, the age of the long peace.

"He's gone," said Dion at last.

Rosamund got up slowly.

"You think he's taken away the child because of us?"

There was an almost pathetic sound in her voice, but there was a smile in it too.

"You remember my stupid remark?"

"Perhaps it wasn't stupid. I think those who dare to have a child ought to keep very near to the world Hermes walks in. They mayn't wear wings on their sandals, but the earth oughtn't to hold their feet too fast. Hermes has taught me."

"No one could ever want to take a child away from you," he answered.

In the vestibule of the Emperors they bade good-bye to the guardian of the Museum, and made him understand that on the morrow they would be gone.

As he looked at Dion's gift he felt for a moment almost depressed. He was accustomed to his constant visitor. Surely he would miss her. She smiled on him with her warm and very human cordiality for the last time, and went away, with her companion, into the dimness towards the hill of Drouva. Then the guardian pulled the great door. It closed with a final sound. The key was turned. And Hermes was left untroubled in that world where wings grow out of the sandals.

# BOOK II

# ECHO

## CHAPTER I

ROBIN, whose other name was Gabriel, arrived at the "little house," of which Rosamund had spoken to Dion upon the hill of Drouva, early in the following year, on the last night of February to be exact. For a long time before his coming his future home had been subtly permeated by an atmosphere of expectancy.

No. 5 Little Market Street was in Westminster, not far from the river and the Houses of Parliament, yet in a street which looked almost remote, and which was often very quiet although close to great arteries of life. Dion sometimes thought it almost too dusky a setting for his Rosamund, but it was she who had chosen it, and they had both become quickly fond of it. It was a house with white panelling, graceful ceilings and carved fireplaces, and a shallow staircase of oak. There was a tiny but welcoming hall, and the landing on the first floor suggested potpourri, chintz-covered settees, and little curtains of chintz moved by a country wind coming through open windows. There were, in fact, chintz-covered settees, and there was potpourri. Rosamund had taken care about that; she had also taken care about many other little things which most London housewives, perhaps, think unworthy of their attention. Every day, for instance, she burnt lavender about the house, and watched the sweet smoke in tiny wreaths curling up from the small shovel, as she gently moved it to and fro, with a half smile of what she called "rustic satisfaction." She laid lavender in the cupboards and in the chests of drawers, and, when she bought flowers, chose by preference cottage garden flowers if she could get them: sweet-williams, pansies, pinks, wallflowers,

white violets, stocks, Canterbury bells. Sometimes she came home with wild flowers, and had once given a little dinner with foxgloves for a table decoration. An orchid, a gardenia, even a hyacinth, was never to be seen in the little house. Rosamund confessed that hyacinths had a lovely name, and that they suggested spring, but she added that they smelt as if they had always lived in hothouses, and were quite ready to be friends with gardenias.

She opened her windows. In this she was almost too rigorous for her maid-servants, who nevertheless adored her. "Plenty of warmth but plenty of air," was her prescription for a comfortable and healthy house, "and not too much or too many of anything." Dust, of course, was not to be known of in her dwelling, but "blacks" were accepted with a certain resignation as a natural chastening and a message from London. "They aren't our fault, Annie," she had been known to observe to the housemaid. "And dust can't be anything else, however you look at it, can it?" And Annie said, "Well, no, ma'am!" and, when she came to think of it, felt she had not been a liar in the moment of speaking.

Rosamund never "splashed," or tried to make a show in her house, and she was very careful never to exceed their sufficient, but not large, income; but the ordinary things, those things which of necessity come into the scheme of everyday life, were always of the very best when she provided them. Dion declared, and really believed, perhaps with reason, that no tea was so fragrant, no bread and butter so delicious, no toast so crisp, as theirs; no other linen felt so cool and fresh to the body as the linen on the beds of the little house; no other silver glittered so brightly as the silver on their round breakfast-table; no other little white window curtains in London managed to look so perennially fresh, and almost blithe, as the curtains which hung at their windows. Rosamund and Annie might have conversations together on the subject of "blacks," but Dion never saw any of these distressing visitants. The mere thought of Rosamund would surely keep them at a more than respectful distance.

She proved to be a mistress of detail, and a housekeeper whose enthusiasm was matched by her competence. At first Dion had been rather surprised when he followed from afar, as is becoming in a man, this development. Before they settled down in London he had seen in Rosamund the

enthusiastic artist, the joyous traveller, the good comrade, the gay sportswoman touched with Amazonian glories; he had known in her the deep lover of pure beauty; he had divined in her something else, a little strange, a little remote, the girl to whom the "Paradiso" was a door opening into dreamland, the girl who escaped sometimes almost mysteriously into regions he knew nothing of; but he had not seen in her one capable of absolutely revelling in the humdrum. Evidently, then, he had not grasped the full meaning of a genuine *joie de vivre*.

To everything she did Rosamund brought zest. She kept house as she sang "The heart ever faithful," holding nothing back. Everything must be right if she could get it right; and the husband got the benefit, incidentally. Now and then Dion found himself mentally murmuring that word. A great love will do such things unreasonably. For Rosamund's *joie de vivre*, that gift of the gods, caused her to love and rejoice in a thing for the thing's own sake, as it seemed, rather than for the sake of some one, any one, who was eventually to gain by the thing. Thus she cared for her little house with a sort of joyous devotion and energy, but because it was "my little house" and deserved every care she could give it. Rather as she had spoken of the small olive tree on Drouva, of the Hermes of Olympia, even of Athens, she spoke of it, with a sort of protective affection, as if she thought of it as a living thing confided to her keeping. She possessed a faculty not very common in women, a delight in doing a thing for its own sake, rather than for the sake of some human being—perhaps a man. If she boiled an egg—she went to the kitchen and did this sometimes—she seemed personally interested in the egg, and keenly anxious to do the best by it; the boiling must be a pleasure to her, but also to the egg, and it must, if possible, be supremely well done. As the cook once said, after a culinary effort by Rosamund, "I never seen a lady care for cooking and all such-like as she done. If she as much as plucked a fowl, you'd swear she loved every feather of it. And as to a roast, she couldn't hardly seem to set more store by it if it was her own husband."

Such a spirit naturally made for comfort in a house, and Dion had never before been so comfortable. Nevertheless—and he knew it with a keen savouring of appreciation—there was a Spartan touch to be felt in the little house. Comfort walked hand in hand with Rosamund, but so did simplicity; she was what the maids called "particular," but she wa

not luxurious; she even disliked luxury, connecting it with superfluity, for which she had a feeling amounting almost to repulsion. "I detest the sensation of sinking down in *things*," was a favourite saying of hers; and the way she lived proved that she spoke the sheer truth.

All through the house, and all through the way of life in it, there prevailed a "note" of simplicity, even of plainness. The odd thing, perhaps, was that it pleased almost every one who visited the young couple. A certain well-known man, noted as a Sybarite, clever, decadent and sought after, once got into the house, he pretended by stealth, and spent half an hour there in conversation with Rosamund. He came away "acutely conscious of my profound vulgarity," as he explained later to various friends. "Her house revealed to me the hideous fact that all the best houses in London smack of cocotte-try; the trail of cushions and liqueurs is over them all. Mrs. Leith's house is a vestal, and its lamp is always trimmed." Daventry's comment on this was: "Trimmed—yes, but trimmings—no!"

Even Esmé Darlington highly approved of the "charming sobriety of No. 5 Little Market Street," although he had had no hand in its preparation, no voice in the deciding of its colours, its stuffs, its rugs, or its stair-rods. He was even heard to declare that "our dear Rosamund is almost the only woman I know who has the precious instinct of reticence; an instinct denied, by the way, even to that delightful and marvellous creature Elizabeth Browning—*requiescat*."

The "charming sobriety" was shown in various ways: in a lack of those enormous cushions which most women either love, or think necessary, in all sitting-rooms; in the comparative smallness of such sofas as were to be seen; in the moderation of depth in arm-chairs, and in the complete absence of footstools. Then the binding of the many books, scattered about here and there, and ranged on shelves, was "quiet"; there was no scarlet and gold, or bright blue and gold; pictures were good but few; not many rugs lay on the polished wooden floors, and there was no litter of ornaments or bibelots on cabinets or tables. A couple of small statuettes, copies of bronzes in the Naples Museum, and some bits of blue-and-white china made their pleasant effect the more easily because they had not to fight against an army of rivals. There was some good early English glass in the small dining-room, and a few fine specimens of lustre ware made a quiet show in Dion's little den. Apart from the white curtains,

and outer curtains of heavier material, which hung at all the windows, there were no "draperies." Overmantels, "cosy-corners," flung Indian shawls, "pieces" snatched from bazaars, and "carelessly" hung over pedestals and divans found no favour in Rosamund's eyes. There was a good deal of homely chintz about which lit up the rather old-fashioned rooms, and colours throughout the house were rather soft than hard, were never emphatic or designed to startle or impress.

Rosamund, indeed, was by far the most vivid thing in the house, and some people—not males—said she had taken care to supply for herself a background which would "throw her up." These people, if they believed what they said, did not know her.

She had on the first floor a little sitting-room all to herself; in this were now to be found the books which had been in her bedroom in Great Cumberland Place; the charwoman's black tray with the cabbage rose, the mug from Greenwich, the flesh-coloured vase, the china cow, the toy trombone, and other souvenirs of her girlhood to which Rosamund "held." On the brass-railed shelf of the writing-table stood a fine photogravure of the Hermes of Olympia with little Dionysos on his arm. Very often, many times every day, Rosamund looked up at Hermes and the Child from account books, letters or notes, and then the green dream of Elis fell about her softly again; and sometimes she gazed beyond the Hermes, but instead of the wall of the chamber she saw, set in an oblong frame, and bathed in green twilight, a bit of the world of Pan, with a branch of wild olive flickering across the foreground; or, now and then, she saw a falling star, dropping from its place in the sky down towards a green wilderness, and carrying a wish from her with it, a wish that was surely soon to be granted. Her life in the little house had been a happy life hitherto, but—she looked again at the little Dionysos on the arm of Hermes, nestling against his shoulder —how much happier it was going to be, how much happier! She was not surprised, for deep in her heart she always expected happiness.

People had been delightful to her and to Dion. Indeed, they had flocked to the small green door (the Elis door) of 5 Little Market Street in almost embarrassing numbers. That was partly Mr. Darlington's fault. Naturally Rosamund's and Bruce Evelin's friends came; and of course Dion's relations and friends came. That would really have

been enough. Rosamund enjoyed, but was not at all "mad about," society, and had no wish to give up the greater part of her time to paying calls. But Mr. Darlington could not forbear from kind efforts on behalf of his delightful young friends, that gifted and beautiful creature Rosamund Leith, and her pleasant young husband. He, who found time for everything, found time to give more than one "little party, just a few friends, no more," specially for them; and the end of it was that they found themselves acquainted with almost too many interesting and delightful people.

At first, too, Rosamund continued to sing at concerts, but at the end of July, after their return from Greece, when the London season closed, she gave up doing so for the time, and accepted no engagements for the autumn. Esmé Darlington was rather distressed. He worked very hard in the arts himself, and, having "launched" Rosamund, he expected great things of her, and wished her to go forward from success to success. Besides "the money would surely come in very handy" to two young people as yet only moderately well off. He did not quite understand the situation. Of course he realized that in time young married people might have home interests, home claims upon them which might necessitate certain changes of procedure. The day might come—he sincerely hoped it would—when a new glory, possibly even more than one, would be added to the delightful Rosamund's crown; but in the meanwhile surely the autumn concerts need not be neglected. He had heard no hint as yet of any—h'm, ha! He stroked his carefully careless beard. But he had left town in August with his curiosity unsatisfied, leaving Rosamund and Dion behind him. They had had their holiday, and had stayed steadily on in Little Market Street through the summer, taking Saturday to Monday runs into the country; more than once to the seacoast of Kent, where Bruce Evelin and Beatrice were staying, and once to Worcestershire to Dion's mother, who had taken a cottage there close to the borders of Warwickshire. The autumn had brought people back to town, and it was in the autumn that Rosamund withdrew from all contact with the hurly-burly of London. She had no fears at all for her body, none of those sick terrors which some women have as their time draws near, no premonitions of disaster or presages of death, but she desired to "get ready," and her way of getting ready was to surround her life with a certain stillness, to build about it white walls of peace. Often when Dion was away in the

City she went out alone and visited some church. Sometimes she spent an hour or two in Westminster Abbey; and on many dark afternoons she made her way to St. Paul's Cathedral where, sitting a long way from the choir, she listened to even-song. The beautiful and tenderly cool singing of the distant boys came to her like something she needed, something to which her soul was delicately attuned. One afternoon they and the men, who formed the deeply melodious background from which their crystalline voices seemed to float forward and upward, sang "The Wilderness" of Wesley. Rosamund listened to it, thankful that she was alone, and remembering many things, among them the green wilderness beneath the hill of Drouva.

Very seldom she spoke to Dion about these excursions of hers. There was something in her feeling for religion which loved reserve rather than expression; she who was so forth-coming in many moments of her life, who was genial and gay, who enjoyed laughter and was always at home with humanity, knew very well how to be silent. There was a saying she cared for, "God speaks to man in the silence;" perhaps she felt there was a suspicion of irreverence in talking to anyone, even to Dion, about her aspiration to God. If, on his return home, he asked her how she had passed the day, she often said only, "I've been very happy." Then he said to him-self, "What more can I want? I'm able to make her happy."

One windy evening in January, when an icy sleet was driving over the town, as he came into the little hall, he found Rosamund at the foot of the staircase, with a piece of mother's work in her hand, about to go into the drawing-room which was on the ground floor of the house.

"Rose," he said, looking down at the little white some-thing she was holding, "do you think we shall both feel ever so much older in March? It will be in March, won't it?"

"I think so," she answered, with a sort of deeply tranquil gravity.

"In March when we are parents?"

"Are you worrying about that?" she asked him, smiling now, but with, in her voice, a hint of reproach.

"Worrying—no. But do you?"

"Let us go into the drawing-room," she said.

When they were there she answered him:

"Absolutely different, but not necessarily older. Feeling

older must be very like feeling old, I think—and I can't imagine feeling old."

"Because probably you never will."

"Have you had tea, Dion?"

"Yes, at the Greville. I promised I'd meet Guy there to-day. He spoke about Beattie."

"Yes?"

"Do you think Beattie would marry him if he asked her?"

"I don't know."

She sat down in the firelight near the hearth, and bent a little over her work on the tiny garment, which looked as if it were intended for the use of a fairy. Dion looked at her head with its pale hair. As he leaned forward he could see all the top of her head. The firelight made some of her hair look quite golden, gave a sort of soft sparkle to the curve of it about her broad, pure forehead.

"Guy's getting desperate," he said. "But he's afraid to put his fortune to the test. He thinks even uncertainty is better than knowledge of the worst."

"Of one thing I'm certain, Dion. Beattie doesn't love Guy Daventry."

"Oh well, then, it's all up."

Rosamund looked up from the little garment.

"I didn't say that."

"But if Beattie—but Beattie's the soul of sincerity."

"Yes, I know; but I think she might consent to marry Guy Daventry."

"But why?"

"I don't know exactly. She never told me. I just feel it."

"Oh, if you feel it, I'm sure it is so. But how awfully odd. Isn't it?"

"Yes, it really is rather odd in Beattie. Do you want Beattie to marry Guy Daventry?"

"Of course I do. Don't you?"

"Dear Beattie! I want her to be happy. But I think it's very difficult, even when one knows some one very, very well, to know just how she can get happiness, through just what."

"Rose, have I made you happy?"

"Yes."

"As happy as you could be?"

"I think, perhaps, you will have—soon."

"Oh, you mean——?"

"Yes."

She went on stitching quietly. Her hands looked very contented. Dion drew up a little nearer to the fire with a movement that was rather brusque. It just struck him that his walk home in the driving sleet had decidedly chilled his body.

"I believe I know what you mean about Beattie," he said, after a pause, looking into the fire. "But do you think that would be fair to Guy?"

"I'm not quite sure myself what I mean, honestly, Dion."

"Well, let's suppose it. If it were so, would it be fair?"

"I think Beattie's so really good that Mr. Daventry, as he loves her, could scarcely be unhappy with her."

Dion thought for a moment, then he said:

"Perhaps with Guy it wouldn't be unfair, but, you know, Rose, that sort of thing wouldn't do with some men. Some men could never stand being married for anything but the one great reason."

He did not explain what that reason was, and Rosamund did not ask. There was a sort of wide and sweet tranquillity about her that evening. Dion noticed that it seemed to increase upon her, and about her, as the days passed by. She showed no sign of nervousness, had evidently no dread at all of bodily pain. Either she trusted in her splendid health, or she was so wrapped up in the thought of the joy of being a mother that the darkness to be passed through did not trouble her; or perhaps—he wondered about this—she was all the time schooling herself, looking up, in memory, to the columns of the Parthenon. He was much more strung up, much more restless and excitable than she was, but she did not seem to notice it. Always singularly unconscious of herself, she seemed at this period to be also unobservant of those about her. He felt that she was being deliberately egoistic for a great reason, that she was caring for herself, soul and body, with a sort of deep and quiet intensity because of the child.

"She is right," he said to himself, and he strove in all ways in his power to aid her beautiful selfishness; nevertheless sometimes he felt shut out; sometimes he felt as if already the unseen was playing truant over the seen. He was conscious of the child's presence in the little house through Rosamund's way of being before he saw the child. He wondered what other women were like in such periods, whether

Rosamund was instinctively conforming to an ancient tradition of her sex, or whether she was, as usual, strongly individualistic. In many ways she was surely not like other women, but perhaps in these wholly natural crises every woman resembled all her sisters who were travelling towards the same sacred condition. He longed to satisfy himself whether this was so or not, and one Saturday afternoon, when Rosamund was resting in her little sitting-room with a book, and the Hermes watching over her, he bicycled to Jenkins's gymnasium in the Harrow Road, resolved to put in forty minutes' hard work, and then to visit his mother. Mrs. Leith and Rosamund seemed to be excellent friends, but Dion never discussed his wife with his mother. There was no reason why he should do so. On this day, however, instinctively he turned to his mother; he thought that she might help him towards a clearer knowledge of Rosamund.

Rosamund had long ago been formally made known to Bob Jenkins, Jim's boxing "coach," who enthusiastically approved of her, though he had never ventured to put his opinion quite in that form to Dion. Even Jenkins, perhaps, had his subtleties, those which a really good heart cannot rid itself of. Rosamund, in return, had made Dion known to her extraordinary friend, Mr. Thrush of Abingdon Buildings, John's Court, near the Edgware Road, the old gentleman who went to fetch his sin every evening, and, it is to be feared, at various other times also, in a jug from the "Daniel Lambert." Dion had often laughed over Rosamund's "cult" for Mr. Thrush, which he scarcely pretended to understand, but Rosamund rejoiced in Dion's cult for the stalwart Jenkins.

"I like that man," she said. "Perhaps some day——" She stopped there, but her face was eloquent.

In his peculiar way Jenkins was undoubtedly Doric, and therefore deserving of Rosamund's respect. Of Mr. Thrush so much could hardly be said with truth. In him there were to be found neither the stern majesty and strength of the Doric, nor the lightness and grace of the Ionic. As an art product he stood alone, always wearing the top hat, a figure Dégas might have immortalized but had unfortunately never seen. Dion knew that Mr. Thrush had once rescued Rosamund in a fog and had convoyed her home, and he put the rest of the Thrush matter down to Rosamund's genial kindness towards downtrodden and unfortunate people. He loved her for it, but could not help being amused by it.

When Dion arrived at the gymnasium, Jenkins was giving

a lesson to a small boy of perhaps twelve years old, whose mother was looking eagerly on. The boy, clad in a white "sweater," was flushed with the ardour of his endeavours to punch the ball, to raise himself up on the bar till his chin was between his hands, to vault the horse neatly, and to turn somersaults on the rings. The primrose-coloured hair on his small round head was all ruffled up, perspiration streamed over his pink rosy cheeks, his eyes shone with determination, and his little white teeth were gritted as, with all the solemn intensity of childhood, he strove to obey on the instant Jenkins's loud words of command. It was obvious that he looked to Jenkins as a savage looks to his Tribal God. His anxious but admiring mother was forgotten; the world was forgotten; Jenkins and the small boy were alone in a universe of grip dumb-bells, heavy weights, "exercisers," boxing gloves, horizontal bars, swinging balls and wooden "horses." Dion stood in the doorway and looked on till the lesson was finished. It ended with a heavy clap on the small boy's shoulders from the mighty paw of Jenkins, and a stentorian, "You're getting along and no mistake, Master Tim!"

The face of Master Tim at this moment was a study. All the flags of triumph and joy were hung out in it and floated on the breeze; a soul appeared at the two windows shining with perfect happiness; and, mysteriously, in all the little figure, from the ruffled primrose-coloured feathers of hair to the feet in the white shoes, the pride of manhood looked forth through the glowing rapture of a child.

"What a jolly boy!" said Dion to Jenkins, when Master Tim and his mother had departed. "It must be good to have a boy like that."

"I hope you'll have one some day, sir," said Jenkins, speaking heartily in his powerful voice, but looking, for the moment, unusually severe.

He and Bert, his wife, had had one child, a girl, which had died of quinsy, and they had never had another.

"Now I'm ready for you, sir!" he added, with a sort of outburst of recovery. "I should like a round with the gloves to-day, if it's all the same to you."

It was all the same to Dion, and, when he reached Queen Anne's Mansions in the darkness of evening, he was still glowing from the exercise; the blood sang through his veins, and his heart was almost as light as his step.

Marion, the parlour-maid, let him in, and told him his mother was at home. Dion put his hand to his lips, stole

across the hall noiselessly, softly opened the drawing-room door, and caught his mother unawares.

Whenever he came into the well-known flat alone, he had a moment of retrogression, went back to his unmarried time, and was again, as for so many years, in the intimate life of his mother. But to-day, as he opened the door, he was abruptly thrust out of his moment. His mother was in her usual place on the high-backed sofa near the fire. She was doing nothing, was just sitting with her hands, in their wrinkled gloves, folded in her lap, and her large, round blue eyes looking. Dion thought of them as looking because they were wide open, but they were strangely emptied of expression. All of his mother seemed to him for just the one instant which followed on his entrance to be emptied, as if the woman he had always known—loving, satirical, clever, kind, observant—had been poured away. The effect upon him was one of indescribable, almost of horrible, dreariness. Omar Khayyám, his mother's black pug, was not in the room as usual, stretched out before the fire.

Even as Dion realized this, his mother was poured back into the round face and plump figure beside the fire, and greeted him with the usual almost saccharine sweet smile, and :

" Dee-ar, I wasn't expecting you to-day. How is the beloved one ? "

" The beloved one " was Mrs. Leith's rendering of Rosamund.

" How particularly spry you look," she added. " I'm certain it's the Jenkins paragon. You've been standing up to him. Now, haven't you ? "

Dion acknowledged that he had, and added :

" But you, mother ? How are you ? "

" Quite wickedly well. I ought to be down with influenza like all well-bred people,—Esmé Darlington has it badly,—but I cannot compass even one sneeze."

" Where's Omar ? "

Mrs. Leith looked grave.

" Poor little chap, we must turn down an empty glass for him."

" What—you don't mean—— ? "

" Run over yesterday just outside the Mansions, and by a four-wheeler. I'm sure he never expected that the angel of death would come for him in a growler, poor little fellow."

" I say ! Little Omar dead ! What a beastly shame ! Mother, I am sorry."

He sat down beside her; he was beset by a sensation of calamity. Oddly enough the hammer of fate had never yet struck on him so definitely as now with the death of a dog. But, without quite realizing it, he was considering poor black Omar as an important element in his mother's life, now abruptly withdrawn. Omar had been in truth a rather greedy, self-seeking animal, but he had also been a companion, an adherent, a friend.

"You must get another dog," Dion added quickly. "I'll find you one."

"Good of you, dee-ar boy! But I'm too old to begin on a new dog."

"What nonsense!"

"It isn't. I feel I'm losing my nameless fascination for dogs. A poodle barked at me this afternoon in Victoria Street. One can't expect one's day to last for ever, though, really, some Englishwomen seem to. But, tell me, how is the beloved one?"

"Oh—to be sure! I wanted to talk to you about Rose."

The smile became very sweet and welcoming on Mrs. Leith's handsome round face.

"There's nothing wrong, I'm sure. Your Rosamund sheds confidence in her dear self like a light all round her."

"Nothing wrong—no. I didn't mean that."

Dion paused. Now he was with his mother he did not know how to explain himself; his reason for coming began to seem, even to himself, a little vague

"It's a little difficult," he began at last, "but I've been wondering rather about women who are as Rosamund is just now. D'you think all women become a good deal alike at such times?"

"In spirit, do you mean?"

"Well—yes, of course"

"I scarcely know."

"I mean do they concentrate on the child a long while before it comes."

"Many smart women certainly don't."

"Oh, smart women! I mean women."

"A good definition, dee-ar. Well, lots of poor women don't concentrate on the child either. They have far too much to do and worry about. They are 'seeing to' things up till the very last moment."

"Then we must rule them out. Let's say the good women who have the time."

"I expect a great many of them do, if the husband lets them."

"Ah!" said Dion rather sharply.

"There are a few husbands, you see, who get fidgety directly the pedestal on which number one thinks himself firmly established begins to shake."

"Stupid fools!"

"Eminently human stupid fools."

"Are they?"

"Don't you think so?"

"Perhaps. But then humanity's contemptible."

"Extra-humanity, or the attempt at it, can be dangerous."

"What do you mean exactly by that, mater?"

"Only that we have to be as we are, and can never really be, can only seem to be, as we aren't."

"What a whipping I'm giving to myself just now!" was her thought, as she finished speaking.

"Oh—yes, of course. That's true. I think—I think Rosamund's concentrating on the child, in a sort of quiet, big way."

"There's something fine in that. But her doings are often touched with fineness."

"Yes, aren't they? She doesn't seem at all afraid."

"I don't think she need be. She has such splendid health."

"But she may suffer very much."

"Yes, but something will carry her gloriously through all that, I expect."

"And you think it's very natural, very usual, her—her sort of living alone with the child before it is born?"

Mrs. Leith saw in her son's eyes an unmistakably wistful look at this moment. It was very very hard for her not to take him in her arms just then, not to say, "My son, d'you suppose I don't understand it all—*all*?" But she never moved, her hands lay still in her lap, and she replied:

"Very natural, quite natural, Dion. Your Rosamund is just being herself."

"You think she's able to live with the child already?"

Mrs. Leith hesitated for a moment. In that moment certainly she felt a strong, even an almost terrible inclination to tell a lie to her son. But she answered:

"Yes, I do."

"That must be very strange," was all that Dion said just then; but a little later on—he stayed with his mother

longer than usual that day because poor little Omar was dead —he remarked :

" D'you know, mater, I believe it's the right thing to be what's called a thorough-paced egoist at certain moments, in certain situations."

" Perhaps it is," said his mother incuriously.

" I fancy there's a good deal of rot talked about egoism and that sort of thing."

" There's a good deal of rot talked about most things."

" Yes, isn't there ? And besides, how is one to know ? Very often what seems like egoism may not be egoism at all. As I grow older I often feel how important it is to search out the real reasons for things."

" Sometimes they're difficult to find," returned his mother, with an unusual simplicity of manner.

" Yes, but still—— Well, I must be off."

He stood up and looked at the Indian rug in front of the hearth.

" When are you coming to see us ? " he asked.

" Almost directly, dee-ar."

" That's right. Rosamund likes seeing you. Naturally she depends upon you at such——" He broke off. " I mean, do come as often as you can."

He bent down and kissed his mother.

" By the way," he added, almost awkwardly, " about that dog ? "

" What dog, dee-ar ? "

" The dog I want to give you."

" We must think about it. Give me time. After a black pug one doesn't know all in a moment what type would be the proper successor. You remember your poor Aunt Binn ? "

" Aunt Binn ! Why, what did she do ? "

" Gave Uncle Binn a hairless thing like a note of interrogation, that had to sleep in a coating of vaseline, when his enormous sheep-dog died who couldn't see for hair. She believed in the value of contrast, but Uncle Binn didn't. It would have led to a separation but for the hectic efforts of your aunt's friend, Miss Vine. When I've decided what type of dog, I'll tell you."

Dion understood the negative and, in spite of his feeling of fitness, went away rather uncomfortably. He couldn't forget the strange appearance of that emptied woman whom he had taken unawares by the fireside. If only his mother would let him give her another dog !

When he got home he found Beatrice sitting with Rosamund.

Dion had grown to be very fond of Beatrice. He had always been rather touched and attracted by her plaintive charm, but since she had become his sister-in-law he had learnt to appreciate also her rare sincerity and delicacy of mind. She could not grip life, perhaps, could not mould it to her purpose and desire, but she could do a very sweet and very feminine thing, she could live, without ever being intrusive, in the life of another. It was impossible not to see how " wrapped up " she was in Rosamund. Dion had come to feel sure that it was natural to Beatrice to lead her life in another's, and he believed that Rosamund realized this and often let Beatrice do little things for her which, full of vigour and " go " as she was, she would have preferred to do for herself.

" I've been boxing and then to see mother," he said, as he took Beatrice's long narrow hand in his. " She sent her best love to you, Rosamund."

" The dear mother ! " said Rosamund gently.

Dion sat down by Beatrice.

" I'm quite upset by something that's happened," he continued. " You know poor little Omar, Beattie ? "

" Yes. Is he ill ? "

" Dead. He was run over yesterday by a four-wheeler."

" Oh ! " said Beatrice.

" Poor little dog," Rosamund said, again gently.

" When they picked him up—are you going, Rose ? "

" Only for a few minutes. I am sorry. I'll write to the dear mother."

She went quietly out of the room. Dion sprang up to open the door for her, but she had been sitting nearer to the door than he, and he was too late ; he shut it, however, and came slowly back to Beatrice.

" I wonder——" He looked at Beatrice's pale face and earnest dark eyes. " D'you think Rosamund disliked my mentioning poor Omar's being killed ? "

" No."

" But didn't she leave us rather abruptly ? "

" I think perhaps she didn't want to hear any details. You were just beginning to——"

" How stupid of me ! "

" You see, Rosamund has the child to live for now."

"Yes—yes. What blunderers we men are, however much we try——"

"That's not a blame you ought to take," Beatrice interrupted, with earnest gentleness. "You are the most thoughtful man I know—for a woman, I mean."

Dion flushed.

"Am I? I try to be. If I am it's because—well, Beattie, you know what Rose is to me."

"Yes, I know."

"Dearer and dearer every day. But nobody—— Mother thinks a lot of her."

"Who doesn't? There aren't many Roses like ours."

"None. Poor mother! Beattie, d'you think she feels very lonely? You know she's got heaps of friends—heaps."

"Yes."

"It isn't as if she knew very few people, or lived alone in the country."

"No, but I'm very sorry her little dog's dead."

"I want to give her another."

"It would be no use."

"But why not?"

"You see, little Omar was always there when you were living there."

"Well?"

"He was part of her life with you."

"Oh—yes."

Dion looked rather hard at Beatrice. In that moment he began to realize how much of the intelligence of the heart she possessed, and how widely she applied it. His application of his intelligence of the heart was, he feared, much less widespread than hers.

"Go to see mother when you can, will you?" he said. "She's very fond of you, I think."

"I'll go. I like going to her."

"And, Beattie, may I say something rather intimate? I'm your brother now."

"Yes."

She was sitting opposite to him near the fire on a low chair. There was a large shaded lamp in the room, but it was on a rather distant table. He saw Beatrice's face by the firelight and her narrow thoroughbred figure in a dark dress. And the firelight, he thought, gave to both face and figure a sort of strange beauty that was sad, and that had something of the strangeness and the beauty of those gold

and red castles children see in the fire. They glow—and that evening there was a sort of glow in Beatrice; they crumble—and there was a pathetic something in Beatrice, too, which suggested wistful desires, perhaps faint hopes and an ending of ashes.

"Would you marry old Guy if he asked you? Don't be angry with me."

"I'm not."

"Of course we've all known for ages how much he cares for you. He spoke to me about it to-day. He's desperately afraid of your refusing him. He daren't put his fate to the test. Beattie—would you?"

A slow red crept over Beatrice's face. She put up one hand to guard herself from the glow of the fire. For a moment she looked at Dion, and he thought, "What a strange expression firelight can give to a face!" Then she said:

"I can't tell you."

Her voice was husky.

"Beattie, you've got a cold!"

"Have I?"

She got up.

"I must go, Dion. I'll just see Rosamund for a minute."

As she left the room, she said:

"I'll go and see your mother to-morrow."

The door shut. Dion stood with one elbow resting on the mantelpiece and looked down into the fire. He saw his mother sitting alone, a strange, emptied figure; he saw Beatrice. And fire, which beautifies, or makes romantic and sad everything, gave to Beatrice the look of his mother. For a moment his soul was full of questions about the two women.

## CHAPTER II

"I'VE joined the Artists' Rifles," Dion said to Rosamund one day.

He spoke almost brusquely. Of late he had begun to develop a manner which had just a hint of roughness in it sometimes. This manner was the expression of a strong inward effort he was making. If, as his mother believed, already Rosamund was able to live with the child, Dion's

solitary possession of the woman he loved was definitely over, probably for ever. Something within him which, perhaps foolishly, rebelled against this fact had driven him to seek a diversion; he had found it in beginning to try to live for the child in the man's way. He intended to put the old life behind him, and to march vigorously on to the new. He called up Master Tim before him in the little white "sweater," with the primrose-coloured ruffled feathers of hair, the gritted white teeth, small almost as the teeth of a mouse, the moist, ardent cheeks, and the glowing eyes looking steadfastly to the Tribal God. He must be the Tribal God to his little son, if the child were a son.

Rosamund did not seem surprised by Dion's abrupt statement, though he had never spoken of an intention to join any Volunteer Corps. She knew he was fond of shooting, and had been in camp sometimes when he was at a public school.

"What's that?" she asked. "I've heard of it, but I thought it was a corps for men who are painters, sculptors, writers and musicians."

"It was founded, nearly forty years ago, I believe, for fellows working in the Arts, but all sorts of business men are let in now."

"Will it take up much time?"

"No; I shall have to drill a certain amount, and in summer I shall go into camp for a bit, and of course, if a big war ever came, I could be of some use."

"I'm glad you've joined."

"I thought you would be. I shall see a little bit less of you, I suppose, but, after all, a husband can't be perpetually hanging about the house, can he?"

Rosamund looked at him and smiled, then laughed gently.

"Dion, how absurd you are! In some ways you are only a boy still."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"A man who sticks to business as you do, hanging about the house!"

"You wouldn't like it if I did."

"No, because I should know it was doing you harm."

"And besides—do you realize how independent you are?"

"Am I?"

"For a woman I think you are extraordinarily independent."

She sat still for a minute, looking straight before her in an almost curious stillness.

"I believe I know why perhaps I seem so," she said at length.

And then she quietly, and very naturally, turned the conversation into another channel; she was a quieter Rosamund in these days of waiting than the Rosamund unaffected by motherhood. That Rosamund had been vigorous and joyous; this Rosamund was strongly serene. In all she was and did at this time Dion felt strength; but it was shown chiefly in stillness. She worked sometimes; she read a great deal sitting upstairs in her own little room. One day Dion found her with a volume of Tennyson; another day she was reading Shakespeare's "Henry the Fifth"; she had the "Paradiso" at hand, too, and the Greek tragedians, and a Greek Testament with the English text in parallel columns. In the room there was a cottage piano, and one evening, when Dion had been drilling and came back late, he heard her singing. He stood still in the hall, after shutting softly the door of the lobby, and listened to the warm and powerful voice of the woman he loved. He could hear the words of the song, which was a setting of "Lead, kindly Light." Rosamund had only just begun singing it when he came into the hall; the first words he caught were, "The night is dark, and I am far from home; lead thou me on." He thrust his hands into the pockets of the black jacket he was wearing and did not move. He had never before heard Rosamund sing any piece of music through without seeing her while she was doing it; her voice seemed to him now different from the voice he knew so well; perhaps because he was uninfluenced by her appearance. That counted for much in the effect Rosamund created when she sang to people. The thought went through Dion's mind, "Am I really the husband of this voice?" It was beautiful, it was fervent, but it was strange, or seemed strange to him as it came down through the quiet house on this winter evening. For the first time, listening thus, he was able imaginatively to realize something of what it must be like to be a mystic, or rather, perhaps, to have within one a definite tendency towards mysticism, a definite and ceaseless and governing aspiration towards harmony with the transcendental order. When this voice which he heard above him sang "The night is dark, and I am far from home," he felt a sort of sharp comprehension of the real meaning of homeless wandering such

as he had certainly never experienced before. He felt, too, that the spirit from which this voice proceeded could never be at home in the ordinary way of ordinary people, could not be at home even as he himself could be at home. The spirit behind this voice needed something of which, till now, he had not consciously felt the need ; something peculiar, out of the way and remote—something very different from human love and human comfort. Although he was musical, and could be critical about a composition according to his lights, Dion did not think about the music of this song *qua* music—could not have said how good he considered it to be. He knew only that this was not poor or insincere music. But music sung in this peculiar way was only a means by which the under part of a human being, that which has its existence deep down under layers and layers of the things which commonly appear and are known of, rose to the surface and announced itself.

The Artists' Rifles—and this !

When the voice was silent, Dion went slowly upstairs. The door of Rosamund's little room was shut. He paused outside it, and stood looking at it, the movable barrier of dark shining wood which divided him from the voice. When he was ascending the stairs he had meant to go in to Rosamund. But now he hesitated, and presently he turned away. He felt that a greater barrier than the door was between them. He might open the door easily enough, but the other barrier would remain. The life of the body seemed to him just then an antagonist to the life of the soul.

"I'm on the lower plane," said Dion to himself that evening. "If it's a boy, I shall have to look after his body ; she'll take care of the rest. Perhaps mothers always do, but not as she could and will."

From this moment he devoted himself as much as possible to his body, almost, indeed, with the ardour of one possessed by a sort of mania. The Artists' Corps took up part of his time ; Jenkins another part ; he practised rifle shooting as diligently almost as if he expected to have to take his place almost immediately in the field ; he began to learn fencing. Rosamund saw very little of him, but she made no comment. He explained to her what he was doing.

"You see, Rose," he said to her once, "if it's a boy it will be my job eventually to train him up to be first-rate in the distinctively man's part of life. No woman can ever do that. I mustn't let myself get slack."

"You never would, I'm sure."

"I hope not. Still, lots of business men do. And I'm sitting about three-quarters of my time. One does get soft, and the softer a chap gets the less inclined he is to make the effort required of him, if he wants to get hard. If I ever am to be the father of a growing-up son—when they get to about sixteen, you know, they get awfully critical about games and athletics, sport, everything of that kind—I should like to be able to keep my end up thoroughly well with him. He'd respect me far more then. I know exactly the type of fellow real boys look up to. It isn't the intelligent softy, however brainy he may be; it's the man who can do all the ordinary things superlatively well."

She smiled at him with her now curiously tranquil yellow-brown eyes, and he thought he saw in them approval.

"I think few men would prepare as you do," she said.

"And how many women would prepare as you do?" he returned.

"I couldn't do anything else. But now I feel as if we were working together, in a way."

He squeezed her hand. She let it lie motionless in his.

"But if it weren't a boy?" he said, struck by a sudden reaction of doubt.

And the thought went, like an arrow, through him:

"What chance should I have then?"

"I know it will be a boy," she answered.

"Why? Not because you sleep north and south!" he exclaimed, with a laughing allusion to the assertion of Herrick.

"I don't."

"I always thought the bed——"

"No, it's east and west."

"Fishermen say the dead sleep east and west."

"Are you superstitious?"

"I don't know. Perhaps, where you are concerned."

"Don't be. Superstition seems to me the opposite of belief. Just wait, and remember I *know* it will be a boy."

One evening Dion went to Great Cumberland Place to dine with Bruce Evelin and Beatrice, leaving Rosamund apparently in her usual health. She was going to have "something on a tray" in her sitting-room, and he went in there to say good-bye to her just before he started. He found

her sitting by the fire, and looking at Hermes and the Child with steady eyes. They were lit up rather faintly by a couple of wax candles placed on the writing-table. The light from these candles and from the fire made a delicate and soothing radiance in the room, which was plainly furnished, and almost sombre in colour. A very dim and cloudy purple-blue pervaded it, a very beautiful hue, but austere, and somehow suggestive of things ecclesiastical. On a small, black oak table at Rosamund's elbow two or three books were lying beside a large bowl of dim blue glass which had opalescent lights in it. This bowl was nearly full of water upon which a water-lily floated. The fire on the hearth was small, but glowing with red and gold. Dark curtains were drawn across the one window which looked out at the back of the house. It was a frosty night and windless.

Dion stood still for a moment on the threshold of the room after he had opened the door.

"How quiet you are in here!" he said.

"This little room is always quiet."

"Yes, but to-night it's like a room to which some one has just said 'Hush!'"

He came in and shut the door gently behind him.

"I've just a minute."

He came up to the fire.

"And so you were looking at him, our Messenger with winged sandals. Oh, Rosamund, how wonderful it was at Olympia! I wonder whether you and I shall ever see the Hermes together again. I suppose all the chances are against it."

"I hope we shall."

"Do you? And yet—I don't know. It would be terrible to see him together again—if things were much altered; if, for instance, one was less happy and remembered——"

He broke off, came to the settee at right angles to the fire on which she was sitting, and sat down beside her. At this moment—he did not know why—the great and always growing love he had for her seemed to surge forward abruptly like a tidal wave, and he was conscious of sadness and almost of fear. He looked at Rosamund as if he were just going to part from her, anxiously, and with a sort of greed of detail.

"Alone I could never go back to Elis," he said. "Never. What a power things have if they are connected in our hearts with people. It's—it's awful."

A clock chimed faintly.

"I must go."

He got up and stood for a moment looking down at the dear head he loved so much, at her brow.

"I don't know why it is," he said, "but this evening I hate leaving you."

"But it's only for a little while."

There was a tap at the door.

"Ah! here's my tray."

The maid came in carrying a woman's meal, and Dion's strange moment was over.

When he got to Great Cumberland Place, Daventry, who was to make a fourth, had just arrived, and was taking off his coat in the hall. He looked unusually excited, alert in an almost feverish way, which was surprising in him.

"I'm in a case," he said, "a quite big case. Bruce Evelin's got it for me. I'm going to be junior to Addington; Lewis & Lewis instruct me. What d'you think of that?"

Dion clapped him on the shoulder.

"The way of salvation!"

"Where will it lead me?"

"To Salvation, of course."

"I'll walk home with you to-night, old Dion. I must yap across the Park with you to Hyde Park Corner, and tell you all about the woman from Constantinople."

They were going upstairs.

"The woman——?"

"My client, my client. My dear boy, this is no ordinary case"—he waved a small hand ceremoniously—"it's a *cause célèbre* or I shouldn't have bothered myself with it."

Lurby opened the drawing-room door.

"How's Rosamund?" was Beatrice's first question to Dion, as they shook hands.

"All right. I left her just going to feed from a tray in her little room."

"Rosamund always loved having a meal on a tray," said Bruce Evelin. "She's a big child still. But enthusiasts never really grow up, luckily for them."

"Dinner is served, sir."

"Daventry, will you take Beatrice?"

As Dion followed with Bruce Evelin, he said:

"So you've got Daventry a case!"

"Yes."

Bruce Evelin lowered his voice.

"He's a good fellow and a clever fellow, but he's got to work. He's been slacking for years."

Dion understood. Bruce Evelin wished Beatrice to marry Daventry.

"He respects you tremendously, sir. If anyone can make him work, you can."

"I'm going to," returned Bruce Evelin, with his quiet force. "He's got remarkable ability, and the slacker—well——"

He looked at Dion with his dark, informed eyes, in which knowledge of the world and of men always seemed sitting.

"I can bear with bad energy almost more easily and comfortably than with slackness."

During dinner, without seeming to, Dion observed and considered Beatrice and Daventry, imagining them wife and husband. He felt sure Daventry would be very happy. As to Beatrice, he could not tell. There was always in Beatrice's atmosphere, or nearly always, a faint suggestion of sadness which, curiously, was not disagreeable but attractive. Dion doubted whether Daventry could banish it. Perhaps no one could, and Daventry had, perhaps, that love which does not wish to alter, which says, "I love you with your little bit of sadness—keep it."

Daventry was exceptionally animated at dinner. The prospect of actually appearing in court as counsel in a case had evidently worked upon him like a powerful tonic. Always able to be amusing when he chose, he displayed to-night a new something—was it a hint of personal dignity?—which Dion had not hitherto found in him. "Dear old Daventry," the agreeable, and obviously clever, nobody, who was a sure critic of others, and never did anything himself, who blinked at moments with a certain feebleness, and was too fond of the cosy fireside, or the deep arm-chairs of his club, had evidently caught hold of the flying skirts of his self-respect, and was thoroughly enjoying his capture. He did not talk very much to Beatrice, but it was obvious that he was at every moment enjoying her presence, her attention; when she listened earnestly he caught her earnestness and it seemed to help him; when she laughed, in her characteristic delicate way,—her laugh seemed almost wholly of the mind,—he beamed with a joy that was touching in a man of his type because it was so unself-conscious. His affection for Beatrice had performed the miracle of drawing him out of the prison of awareness in which such men as he dwell. To-night he was actually

unobservant. Dion knew this by the changed expression of his eyes. Even Beatrice he was not observing; he was just feeling what she was, how she was. For once he had passed beyond the narrow portals and had left satire far behind him.

When Beatrice got up to go to the drawing-room he opened the door for her. She blushed faintly as she went out. When the door was shut, and the three men were alone, Bruce Evelin said to Dion:

"Will you mind if Daventry and I talk a little shop to-night?"

"Of course not. But would you rather I went up and kept Beattie company?"

"No; stay till you're bored, or till you think Beatrice is bored. Let us light up."

He walked slowly, with his gently precise gait, to a cigar cabinet, opened it, and told the young men to help themselves.

"And now for the Clarke case," he said.

"Is that the name of the woman from Constantinople?" asked Dion.

"Yes, Mrs. Beadon Clarke," said Daventry. "But she hates the Beadon and never uses it. Beadon Clarke's trying to divorce her, and I'm on her side. She's staying with Mrs. Chetwinde. Esmé Darlington, who's an old friend of hers, thinks her too unconventional for a diplomatist's wife."

Bruce Evelin had lighted his cigar.

"We mustn't forget that our friend Darlington has always run tame rather than wild," he remarked, with a touch of dry satire. "And now, Daventry, let us go through the main facts of the case, without, of course, telling any professional secrets."

And he began to outline the Clarke case, which subsequently made a great sensation in London.

It appeared that Mrs. Clarke had come first to him in her difficulty, and had tried hard to persuade him to emerge from his retirement and to lead for her defence. He had been determined in refusal, and had advised her to get Sir John Addington, with Daventry as junior. This she had done. Now Bruce Evelin was carefully "putting up" Daventry to every move in the great game which was soon to be played out, a game in which a woman's honour and future were at stake. The custody of a much-loved child might also come into question.

"Suppose Addington is suddenly stricken with paralysis in the middle of the case, you must be ready to carry it through triumphantly alone," he observed, with quietly twinkling eyes, to Daventry.

"May I have a glass of your oldest brandy, sir?" returned Daventry, holding on to the dinner-table with both hands.

The brandy was given to him and the discussion of the case continued. By degrees Dion found himself becoming strongly interested in Mrs. Clarke, whose name came up constantly. She was evidently a talented and very unusual woman. Perhaps the latter fact partially accounted for the unusual difficulties in which she was now involved. Her husband, Councillor to the British Embassy at Constantinople, charged her with misconduct, and had cited two co-respondents,—Hadi Bey, a Turkish officer, and Aristide Dumeny, a French diplomat,—both apparently men of intellect and of highly cultivated tastes, and both slightly younger than Mrs. Clarke. A curious fact in the case was that Beadon Clarke was deeply in love with his wife, and had—so Dion gathered from a remark of Bruce Evelin's—probably been induced to take action against her by his mother, Lady Ermyntrude Clarke, who evidently disliked, and perhaps honestly disbelieved in, her daughter-in-law. There was one child of the marriage, a boy, to whom both the parents were deeply attached. The elements of tragedy in the drama were accentuated by the power to love possessed by accuser and accused. As Dion listened to the discussion he realized what a driving terror, what a great black figure, almost monstrous, love can be—not only the sunshine, but the abysmal darkness of life.

Presently, in a pause, while Daventry was considering some difficult point, Dion remembered that Beatrice was sitting upstairs alone. Her complete unselfishness always made him feel specially chivalrous towards her. Now he got up.

"It's tremendously interesting, but I'm going upstairs to Beattie," he said.

"Ah, how subtle of you, my boy!" said Bruce Evelin.

"Subtle! Why?"

"I was just coming to the professional secrets."

Dion smiled and went off to Beattie. He found her working quietly, almost dreamily, on one of those fairy garments such as he had seen growing towards its minute full size in the serene hands of his Rosamund.

"You too!" he said, looking down at the filmy white. "How good you are to us, Beattie!"

He sat down.

"What's this in your lap?"

The filmy white had been lifted in the process of sewing, and a little exquisitely bound white book was disclosed beneath it.

"May I look?"

"Yes, do."

Dion took the book up, and read the title, "The Kasîdah of Haji Abdû El-Yezdî."

"I never heard of this. Where did you get it?"

"Guy Daventry left it here by mistake yesterday. I must give it to him to-night."

Dion opened the book, and saw on the title page: "Cynthia Clarke, Constantinople, October 1896," written in a curiously powerful, very upright caligraphy.

"It doesn't belong to Guy."

"No; it was lent to him by his client, Mrs. Clarke."

Dion turned some of the leaves of the book, began to read and was immediately absorbed.

"By Jove, it's wonderful, it's simply splendid!" he said in a moment. "Just listen to this:

"True to thy nature, to thyself,
Fame and disfame nor hope, nor fear;
Enough to thee the still small voice
Aye thundering in thine inner ear.

From self-approval seek applause:
What ken not men thou kennest thou!
Spurn every idol others raise:
Before thine own ideal bow."

He met the dark eyes of Beatrice.

"You care for that?"

"Yes, very much," she answered, in her soft and delicate voice.

"Beattie, I believe you live by that," he said, almost brusquely.

Suddenly he felt aware of a peculiar sort of strength in her, in her softness, a strength not at all as of iron, mysterious and tenacious.

"Dear old Beattie!" he said.

Moisture had sprung into his eyes.

"How lonely our lives are" he continued, looking at her

now with a sort of deep curiosity. "The lives of all of us. I don't care who it is, man, woman, child, he or she, every one's lonely. And yet——"

A doubt had surely struck him. He sat very still for a minute.

"When I think of Rosamund I can't think of her as lonely."

"Can't you?"

"No. Somehow it seems as if she always had a companion with her."

He turned a few more pages of Mrs. Clarke's book, glancing here and there.

"Rosamund would hate this book," he said presently. "It seems thoroughly anti-Christian. But it's very wonderful."

He put the book down.

"Dear Beattie! Guy cares very much for you."

"Yes, I know," said Beatrice, with a great simplicity.

"If he comes well out of this case, and feels he's on the road to success, he'll be another man. He'll dare as a man ought to dare."

She went on sewing the little garment for Dion's child.

"I'll walk across the Park with you, old Dion," said Daventry that night, as they left the house in Great Cumberland Place, "whether you're going to walk home or whether you're not, whether you're in a devil of a hurry to get back to your Rosamund, or whether you're in a mood for friendship. What time is it, by the way?"

He was wrapped in a voluminous blue overcoat, with a wide collar, immense lapels, and apparently only one button, and that button so minute that it was scarcely visible to the naked eye. From somewhere he extracted a small, abnormally thin watch with a gold face.

"Only twenty minutes to eleven. We dined early."

"You really wish to walk?"

"I not only wish, I will walk."

The still glory of frost had surely fascinated London, had subdued the rumbling and uneasy black monster; it seemed to Dion unusually quiet, almost like something in ecstasy under the glittering stars of frost, which shone in a sky swept clear of clouds by the hand of the lingering winter. It was the last night of February, but it looked, and felt, like a night dedicated to the Christ-Child, to Him who lay on the breast of Mary with cattle breathing above Him. As

Dion gazed up at the withdrawn and yet almost piercing radiance of the wonderful sky, instinctively he thought of the watching shepherds, and of the coming of that Child who stands for ever apart from all the other children born of women into this world. He wished Rosamund were with him to see the stars, and the frost glistening white on the great stretches of grass, and the naked trees in the mysterious and romantic Park.

"Shall we take the right-hand path and walk round the Serpentine?" said Daventry presently.

"Yes. I don't mind. Rosamund will be asleep, I think. She goes to bed early now."

"When will it be?"

"Very soon, I suppose; perhaps in ten days or so."

Daventry was silent. He wanted and meant to talk about his own affairs, but he hesitated to begin. Something in the night was making him feel very small and very great. Dion gave him a lead by saying:

"D'you mind my asking you something about the Clarke case?"

"Anything you like. I'll answer if I may."

"Do you believe Mrs. Clarke to be guilty or innocent?"

"Oh, innocent!" exclaimed Daventry, with unusual warmth.

"And does Bruce Evelin?"

"I believe so. I assume so."

"I noticed that, while I was listening to you both, he never expressed any opinion, or gave any hint of what his opinion was on the point."

"I feel sure he thinks her innocent," said Daventry, still almost with heat. "Not that it much matters," he added, in a less prejudiced voice. "The point is, we must prove her to be innocent whether she is or not. I happen to feel positive she is. She isn't the least the siren type of woman, though men like her."

"What type is she?"

"The intellectual type. Not a blue-stocking! God forbid! I couldn't defend a blue-stocking. But she's a woman full of taste, who cares immensely for fine and beautiful things, for things that appeal to the eye and the mind. In that way, perhaps, she's almost a sensualist. But, in any other way! I want you to know her. She's a very very interesting woman. Esmé Darlington says her per-

ceptions are exquisite. Mrs. Chetwinde's backing her up for all she's worth."

"Then she believes her to be innocent too, of course."

"Of course. Come with me to Mrs. Chetwinde's next Sunday afternoon. She'll be there."

"On a night like this, doesn't a divorce case seem preposterous?"

"Well, you have the tongue of the flatterer!"—he looked up—"But perhaps it does, even when it's Mrs. Clarke's."

"Are you in love with Mrs. Clarke?"

"Deeply, because she's my first client in a *cause célèbre*."

"Have you forgotten her book again?"

"Her book? 'The Kasîdah?' I've got it here."

He tapped the capacious side pocket of his coat.

"You saw it then?" he added.

"Beattie had it when I went upstairs."

"I wonder what she made of it," Daventry said, with softness in his voice. "Don't ever let Rosamund see it, by the way. It's anything rather than Christian. Mrs. Clarke gets hold of everything, dives into everything. She's got an unresting mind."

They had come to the edge of the Serpentine, on which there lay an ethereal film of baby ice, almost like frosted gauze. The leafless trees, with their decoration of filigree, suggested the North and its peculiar romance—nature trailing away into the mighty white solitudes where the Pole star reigns over fields of ice.

"Hyde Park is bringing me illusions to-night," said Daventry. "That water might be the Vistula. If I heard a wolf howling over there near the ranger's lodge, I shouldn't be surprised."

A lifeguardsman, in a red cloak, and a woman drifted away over the frost among the trees.

"I love Mrs. Clarke as a client, but perhaps I love her even more because, through her, I hope to get hold of something I've—I've let drop," continued Daventry.

"What's that?"

Daventry put his arm through Dion's.

"I don't know whether I can name it even to you; but it's something a man of great intelligence, such as myself, should always keep in his fist."

He paused.

"The clergy are apt to call it self-respect," he at length added, in a dry voice.

Dion pressed his arm.

"Bruce Evelin wants you to marry Beatrice."

"He hasn't told you so?"

"No, except by taking the trouble to force you to work."

Daventry stood still.

"I'm going to ask her—almost directly."

"Come on, Guy, or we shall have all the blackbirds round us. Look over there."

Not far off, among the trees, two slinking and sinister shadows of men seemed to be intent upon them.

"Isn't it incredible to practise the profession of a blackmailer out of doors on a night like this?" said Dion. "D'you remember when we were in the night train coming from Burstal? You had a feather that night."

"Damn it! Why rake up——?"

"And I said how wonderful it would be if some day I were married to Rosamund."

"Is it wonderful?"

"Yes."

"Very wonderful?"

"Yes."

"Children too!"

Daventry sighed.

"One wants to be worthy of it all," he murmured. "And then"—he laughed, as if calling in his humour to save him from something—"the children, in their turn, feel they would like to live up to papa. Dion, people can be caught in the net of goodness very much as they can be caught in the net of evil. Let us praise the stars for that."

They arrived at the bridge. The wide road, which looked to-night extraordinarily clean, almost as if it had been polished up for the passing of some delicate procession in the night, was empty. There were no vehicles going by; the night-birds kept among the trees. The quarter after eleven chimed from some distant church. Dion thought of Rosamund, as he paused on the bridge, thought of himself as a husband yielding his wife up to the solitude she evidently desired. He took Daventry for his companion; she had the child for hers. There was suffering of a kind even in a very perfect marriage, but what he had told Daventry was true; it had been very wonderful. He had learnt a great deal in his marriage, dear lessons of high-mindedness in desire, of purity

in possession. If Rosamund were to be cut off from him even to-night he had gained enormously by the possession of her. He knew what woman can be, and without disappointment; for he did not choose to reckon up those small, almost impalpable things which, like passing shadows, had now and then brought a faint obscurity into his life with Rosamund, as disappointments. They came, perhaps, from himself. And what were they? He looked out over the long stretch of unruffled water, filmed over with ice near the shores, and saw a tiny dark object travelling through it with self-possession and an air of purpose beneath the constellations; some aquatic bird up to something, heedless of the approaching midnight and the Great Bear.

"Look at that little beggar!" said Daventry. "And we don't know so very much more about it all than he does. I expect he's a Muscovy duck, or drake, if you're a pedant about genders."

"He's evidently full of purpose."

"Out in the middle of the ice-cold Serpentine. He's only a speck now, like our world in space. Now I can't see him."

"I can."

"You're longer-sighted than I am. But, Dion, I'm seeing a longish way to-night, farther than I've seen before. Love's a great business, the greatest business in life. Ambition, and greed, and vanity, and altruism, and even fanaticism, must give place when it's on hand, when it harnesses its winged horses to a man's car and swings him away to the stars."

"Ask her. I think she'll have you."

A star fell through the frosty clear sky. Dion remembered the falling star above Drouva. This time he was swift with a wish, but it was not a wish for his friend.

They reached Hyde Park Corner just before midnight and parted there. Dion hailed a hansom, but Daventry declared with determination that he was going to walk all the way home to Phillimore Gardens.

"To get up my case, to arrange things mentally," he explained. "Big brains always work best at night. All the great lawyers toil when the stars are out. Why should I be an exception? I dedicate myself to Cynthia Clarke. She will have my undivided attention and all my deepest solicitude."

"I know why."

"No, no."

He put one hand on the apron which Dion had already closed.

"No, really, you're wrong. I am deeply interested in Mrs. Clarke because she is what she is. I want her to win because I'm convinced she's innocent. Will you come to Mrs. Chetwinde's next Sunday and meet her?"

"Yes, unless Rosamund wants me."

"That's always understood."

The cab drove away, and the great lawyer was left to think of his case under the stars.

When the cab turned the corner of Great Market Street, Westminster, and came into Little Market Street, Dion saw in the distance before him two large, staring yellow eyes, which seemed to be steadily regarding him like the eyes of something on the watch. They were the lamps of a brougham drawn up in front of No. 5. Dion's cabman, perforce, pulled up short before the brown door of No. 4.

"A carriage in front of my house at this time of night!" thought Dion, as he got out and paid the man.

He looked at the coachman and at the solemn brown horse between the shafts, and instantly realized that this was the carriage of a doctor.

"Rosamund!"

With a thrill of anxiety, a clutch at his heart, he thrust his latchkey into the door. It stuck; he could not turn it. This had never happened before. He tried, with force, to pull the key out. It would not move. He shook it. The doctor's coachman, he felt, was staring at him from the box of the brougham. As he struggled impotently with the key his shoulders began to tingle, and a wave of acute irritation flooded him. He turned sharply round and met the coachman's eyes, shrewd, observant, lit, he thought, by a flickering of sarcasm.

"Has the doctor been here long?" said Dion.

"Sir?"

"This is a doctor's carriage, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir. Doctor Mayson."

"Well, I say, has he been here long?"

"About an hour, sir, or a little more."

"Thanks."

Dion turned again and assaulted the latchkey.

But he had to ring the bell to get in. When the maid came, looking excited, he said:

"I don't know what on earth's the matter with this key. I can't either turn it or get it out."

"No, sir?"

The girl put her hand to the key, and without any difficulty drew it out of the door.

"I don't know—I couldn't!"

The girl shut the door.

"What's the matter? Why's the doctor here? It isn't——?"

"Yes, sir," said the girl, with a sort of intensely feminine significance. "It came on quite sudden."

"How long ago?"

"A good while, sir. I couldn't say exactly."

"But why wasn't I sent for?"

"My mistress wouldn't have you sent for, sir. Besides, we were expecting you every moment."

"Ah! and I—and now it's past midnight."

He had quickly taken off his coat, hat and gloves. Now he ran up the shallow steps of the staircase. There was a sort of tumult within him. He felt angry, he did not know why. His whole body was longing to do something strong, eager, even violent. He hated his latchkey, he hated the long stroll in Hyde Park, the absurd delay upon the bridge, his preoccupation with the Muscovy duck, or whatever bird it was, voyaging over the Serpentine. Why had nothing told him not to lose a moment but to hurry home? He remembered that he had been specially reluctant to leave Rosamund that evening, that he had even said to her, "I don't know why it is, but this evening I hate to leave you." Perhaps, then, he had been warned, but he had not comprehended the warning. As he had looked at the stars he had thought of the coming of the most wonderful Child who had ever visited this earth. Perhaps then, too—— He tried to snap off his thought, half confusedly accusing himself of some sort of blasphemy. At the top of the staircase he turned and looked down into the hall.

"The nurse?"

"Sir?"

"Have you managed to get the nurse?"

"Yes, sir; she's been here some time."

At this moment Doctor Mayson opened the door of Rosamund's room and came out upon the landing—a tall, rosy and rather intellectual-looking man, with tranquil grey eyes, and hair thinning above a high, knobby

forehead. Dion had never seen him before. They shook hands.

"I shouldn't go into your wife's room," said Doctor Mayson in a low bass voice.

"Why? Doesn't she wish it?"

"She wished you very much to be in the house."

"Then why not send for me?"

"She was against it, I understand. And she doesn't wish anyone to be with her just now except the nurse and myself."

"When do you expect . . .?"

"Some time during the night. It's evidently going to be an easy confinement. I'm just going down to send away my carriage. It's no use keeping the horse standing half the night in this frost. I'm very fond of horses."

"Fond of horses—are you?" said Dion, rather vacantly.

"Yes. Are you?"

The low bass voice almost snapped out the question.

"Oh, I dare say. Why not? They're useful animals. I'll come down with you if I'm not to go into my wife's room."

He followed the doctor down the stairs he had just mounted. When the carriage had been sent away, he asked Doctor Mayson to come into his den for a moment. The pains of labour had come on unexpectedly, but were not exceptionally severe; everything pointed to an easy confinement.

"Your wife is one of the strongest and healthiest women I have ever attended," Doctor Mayson added; "superb health. It's a pleasure to see anyone like that. I look after so many neurotic women in London. They give themselves up for lost when they are confronted with a perfectly natural crisis. Mrs. Leith is all courage and self-possession."

"But then why shouldn't I see her?"

"Well, she seems to have an extraordinary sense of duty towards the child that's coming. She thinks you might be less calm than she is."

"But I'm perfectly calm."

Doctor Mayson smiled.

"D'you know, it's really ever so much better for us men to keep right out of the way in such moments as these. It's the kindest thing we can do."

"Very well. I'll do it of course."

"I never go near my own wife when she's like this."

Dion stared into the fire.

"Have you many children?"

"Eleven," remarked the bass voice comfortably. "But I married very young, before I left Guy's. Now I'll go up again. You needn't be the least alarmed."

"I'm not," said Dion brusquely.

"Capital!"

And Doctor Mayson went off, not treading with any precaution. It was quite obvious that his belief in his patient was genuine.

Eleven children! Well, some people were prepared to take any risks and to face any responsibilities. Was it very absurd to find in the coming of one child a tremendous event? Really, Doctor Mayson had almost succeeded in making Dion feel a great fool. Just another child in the world—crying, dribbling, feebly trying to grasp the atmosphere; another child to cut its first tooth, with shrieks, to have whooping-cough, chicken-pox, rose rash and measles; another child to eat of the fruit of the tree; another child to combat and love and suffer and die. No, damn it, the matter was important. Doctor Mayson and his rosy face were unmeaning. He might have eleven, or a hundred and eleven children, but he had no imagination.

Dion shut himself into his room, sat down in a big arm-chair, lit his pipe and thought about the Clarke case. He had just told Doctor Mayson a white lie. He was determined not to think about his Rosamund: he dared not do that; so his mind fastened on the Clarke case. Almost ferociously he flung himself upon it, called upon the unknown Mrs. Clarke, the woman whom he had never seen, to banish from him his Rosamund, to interpose between her and him. For Rosamund was inevitably suffering, and if he thought about that suffering his deep anxiety, his pity, his yearning would grow till they were almost unendurable, might even lead his feet to the room upstairs, the room forbidden to him to-night. So he called to Mrs. Clarke, and at last, obedient to his insistent demand, she came and did her best for him, came, he imagined, from Constantinople, to keep him company in this night of crisis.

As Daventry had described her, as Bruce Evelin had, with casual allusions and suggestive hints, built her up before Dion in the talk after dinner that night, so she was now in the little room: a woman of intellect and of great taste, with an intense love for, and fine knowledge of, beautiful things: a woman who was almost a sensualist in her adoration for fine and rare things.

"I detest the sensation of sinking down in things!"

Who had said that once with energy in Dion's hearing? Oh—Rosamund, of course! But she must not be admitted into Dion's life in these hours of waiting. Mrs. Clarke must be allowed to reign. She had come (in Dion's imagination) all the way from the city of wood and of marble beside the seaway of the Golden Horn, a serious, intellectual and highly cultivated woman, whom a cruel fate—Kismet—was now about to present to the world as a horrible woman. Pale, thin, rather melancholy she was, a reader of many books, a great lover of nature, a woman who cared very much for her one child. Why should Fate play such a woman such a trick? Perhaps because she was very unconventional, and it is unwise for the bird which sings in the cage of diplomacy to sing any but an ordinary song.

Daventry had dwelt several times on Mrs. Clarke's unconventionality; evidently the defence meant to lay stress on it.

So now Dion sat with a pale, thin, unconventional woman, and she told him about the life at Stamboul. She knew, of course, that he had hated Constantinople. He allowed her to know that. And she pointed out to him that he knew nothing of the wonderful city, upon which Russia breathes from the north, and which catches, too, strange airs and scents and murmurs of voices from distant places of Asia. What does the passing tourist of a Pera hotel know about the great city of the Turks? Nothing worth knowing. The roar of the voices of the Levant deafens his ears; the glitter of the shop windows in the Grande Rue blinds his eyes. He knows not the exquisite and melancholy charm, full of nuances and of the most fragile and evanescent subtleties, which Constantinople holds for those who know her and love her well.

The defence was evidently going to make much of Mrs. Clarke's passion for the city on the Bosporus. Daventry had alluded to it more than once, and Bruce Evelin had said, "Mrs. Clarke has always had an extraordinary feeling for places. If her husband had accused her of a liaison with Eyub, or of an unholy fancy for the forest of Belgrâd, we might have been in a serious difficulty. She had, I know, a regular romance once with the Mosquée Verte at Brûsa."

Evidently she was a woman whom ordinary people would be likely to misunderstand. Dion sat in his arm-chair trying to understand her. The effort would help him to forget, or

to ignore if he couldn't forget, what was going on upstairs in the little house. He pulled hard at his pipe, as an aid to his mind ; he sat alone for a long while with Mrs. Clarke. Sometimes he looked across the Golden Horn from a bit of waste ground in Pera, near to a small cemetery : it was from there, towards evening, that he had been able to " feel " Stamboul, to feel it as an unique garden city, held by the sea, wooden and frail, marble and enduring. And somewhere in the great and mysterious city Mrs. Clarke had lived and been adored by the husband who, apparently still adoring, was now trying to get rid of her.

Sometimes Dion heard voices rising from the crowded harbour of the Golden Horn. They crept up out of the mystery of the evening ; voices from the caïques, and from the boats of the fishermen, and from the big sailing vessels which ply to the harbours of the East, and from the steamers at rest near the Galata Bridge, and from the many craft of all descriptions strung out towards the cypress-crowned hill of Eyub. And Mrs. Clarke, standing beside him, began to explain to him in a low and hoarse voice what these strange cries of the evening meant.

Daventry had mentioned that she had a hoarse voice.

At a little after three o'clock Dion sat forward abruptly in his chair and listened intently. He fancied he had heard a faint cry. He waited, surrounded by silence, enveloped by silence. There was a low drumming in his ears. Mrs. Clarke had escaped like a phantom. Stamboul, with its mosques, its fountains, its pigeons and its plane trees, had faded away. The voices from the Golden Horn were stilled. The drumming in Dion's ears grew louder. He stood up. He felt very hot, and a vein in his left temple was beating —not fluttering, but beating hard.

He heard, this time really heard, a cry overhead, and then the muffled sound of some one moving about ; and he went to the door, opened it and passed out into the hall. He did not go upstairs, but waited in the hall until Doctor Mayson came down, looking as rosy and serene and unconcerned as ever.

" Well, Mr. Leith," he said, " you're a father. I congratulate you. Your wife has got through beautifully."

" Yes ? "

" By the way, it's a boy."

" Yes, of course."

Doctor Mayson looked genuinely surprised.

"Why 'of course'? I don't quite understand."

"She knew it was going to be a boy."

The doctor smiled faintly.

"Women often have strange fancies at such times. I mean before they are confined."

"But you see she was right. It is a boy."

"Exactly," returned the doctor, looking at his nails.

Dion saw the star falling above the hill of Drouva.

Did the Hermes know?

## CHAPTER III

ON the following Sunday afternoon Dion was able to fulfil his promise to Daventry. Rosamund and the baby were "doing beautifully"; he was not needed at home, so he set out with Daventry, who came to fetch him, to visit Mrs. Willie Chetwinde in Lowndes Square.

When they reached the house Daventry said:

"Now for Mrs. Clarke. She's really a wonderful woman, Dion, and she's got a delicious profile."

"Oh, it's that——"

"No, it isn't."

He gently pushed Mrs. Chetwinde's bell.

As they went upstairs they heard a soft hum of voices.

"Mrs. Clarke's got heaps of people on her side," whispered Daventry. "This is a sort of rallying ground for the defence."

"Where's her child? Here?"

"No, with some relations till the trial's over."

The butler opened the door, and immediately Dion's eyes rested on Mrs. Clarke, who happened to be standing very near to it with Esmé Darlington. Directly Dion saw her he knew at whom he was looking. Something—he could not have said what—told him.

By a tall pedestal of marble, on which was poised a marble statuette of Echo,—not that Echo who babbled to Hera, but she who, after her punishment, fell in love with Narcissus,—he saw a very thin, very pale, and strangely haggard-looking woman of perhaps thirty-two talking to Esmé Darlington. At first sight she did not seem beautiful to Dion. He was

accustomed to the radiant physical bloom of his Rosamund. This woman, with her tenuity, her pallor, her haunted cheeks and temples, her large, distressed and observant eyes—dark hazel in colour under brown eyebrows drawn with a precise straightness till they neared the bridge of the nose and there turning abruptly downwards, her thin and almost white-lipped mouth, her cloudy brown hair which had no shine or sparkle, her rather narrow and pointed chin, suggested to him unhealthiness, a human being perhaps stricken by some obscure disease which had drained her body of all fresh colour, had robbed it of flesh, had caused to come upon her something strange, not easily to be defined, which almost suggested the charnel-house.

As he was looking at her, Mrs. Clarke turned slightly and glanced up at the statue of Echo, and immediately Dion realized that she had beauty. The line of her profile was wonderfully delicate and refined, almost ethereal in its perfection; and the shape of her small head was exquisite. Her head, indeed, looked girlish. Afterwards he knew that she had enchanting hands—moving purities full of expressiveness—and slim little wrists. Her expression was serious, almost melancholy, and in her whole personality, shed through her, there was a penetrating refinement, a something delicate, wild and feverish. She looked very sensitive and at the same time perfectly self-possessed, as if, perhaps, she dreaded Fate but could never be afraid of a fellow-creature. He thought:

"She's like Echo after her punishment."

On his way to greet Mrs. Chetwinde, he passed by her; as he did so she looked at him, and he saw that she thoroughly considered him, with a grave swiftness which seemed to be an essential part of her personality. Then she spoke to Esmé Darlington. Dion just caught the sound of her voice, veiled, husky, but very individual and very attractive—a voice that could never sing, but that could make of speech a music frail and evanescent as a nocturne of Debussy's.

"Daventry's right," thought Dion. "That woman is surely innocent."

Mrs. Chetwinde, who was as haphazard, as apparently absent-minded and as shrewd in her own house as in the houses of others, greeted Dion with a vague cordiality. Her husband, a robust and very definite giant, with a fan-shaped beard, welcomed him largely.

"Never appear at my wife's afternoons, you know," he

observed, in a fat and genial voice. "But to-day's exceptional. Always stick to an innocent woman in trouble."

He lowered his voice in speaking the last sentence, and looked very human. And immediately Dion was aware of a special and peculiar atmosphere in Mrs. Chetwinde's drawing-room on this Sunday afternoon, of something poignant almost, though lightly veiled with the sparkling gossamer which serves to conceal undue angularities, something which just hinted at tragedy confronted with courage, at the attempted stab and the raised shield of affection. Here Mrs. Clarke was in sanctuary. He glanced towards her again with a deepening interest.

"Canon Wilton's coming in presently," said Mrs. Chetwinde. "He's preaching at St. Paul's this afternoon, or perhaps it's Westminster Abbey—something of that kind."

"I've heard him two or three times," answered Dion, who was on very good, though not on very intimate, terms with Canon Wilton. "I'd rather hear him than anybody."

"In the pulpit—yes, I suppose so. I'm scarcely an amateur of sermons. He's a volcano of sincerity, and never sends out ashes. It's all red-hot lava. Have you met Cynthia Clarke?"

"No."

"She's over there, echoing my Echo. Would you like——?"

"Very much indeed."

"Then I'll——"

An extremely pale man, with long, alarmingly straight hair and wandering eyes almost the colour of silver, said something to her.

"Watteau? Oh no—he died in 1721, not in 1722," she replied. "The only date I never can remember is William the Conqueror. But of course you couldn't remember about Watteau. It's distance makes memory. You're too near."

"That's the fan painter, Murphy-Elphinston, Watteau's reincarnation," she added to Dion. "He's always asking questions about himself. Cynthia—this is Mr. Dion Leith. He wishes——" She drifted away, not, however, without dexterously managing to convey Mr. Darlington with her.

Dion found himself looking into the large, distressed eyes of Mrs. Clarke. Daventry was standing close to her, but, with a glance at his friend, moved away.

"I should like to sit down," said Mrs. Clarke.

"Here are two chairs——"

"No, I'd rather sit over there under the Della Robbia. I can see Echo from there."

She walked very slowly and languidly, as if tired, to a large and low sofa covered with red, which was exactly opposite to the statuette. Dion followed her, thinking about her age. He supposed her to be about thirty-two or thirty-three, possibly a year or two more or less. She was very simply dressed in a grey silk gown with black and white lines in it. The tight sleeves of it were unusually long and ended in points. They were edged with some transparent white material which rested against her small hands.

She sat down and he sat down by her, and they began to talk. Unlike Mrs. Chetwinde, Mrs. Clarke showed that she was alertly attending to all that was said to her, and, when she spoke, she looked at the person to whom she was speaking, looked steadily and very unself-consciously. Dion mentioned that he had once been to Constantinople.

"Did you care about it?" said Mrs. Clarke, rather earnestly.

"I'm afraid I disliked it, although I found it, of course, tremendously interesting. In fact, I almost hated it."

"That's only because you stayed in Pera," she answered, "and went about with a guide."

"But how do you know?"—he was smiling.

"Well, of course you did."

"Yes."

"I could easily make you love it," she continued, in an oddly impersonal way, speaking huskily.

Dion had never liked huskiness before, but he liked it now.

"You are fond of it, I believe?" he said.

His eyes met hers with a great deal of interest.

He considered her present situation an interesting one; there was drama in it; there was the prospect of a big fight, of great loss or great gain, destruction or vindication.

In her soul already the drama was being played. He imagined her soul in turmoil, peopled with a crowd of jostling desires and fears, and he was thinking a great many things about her, and connected with her, almost simultaneously—so rapidly a flood of thoughts seems to go by in the mind—as he put his question.

"Yes, I do," replied Mrs. Clarke. "Stamboul holds me very fast in its curiously inert grip. It's a grip like this."

She held out her small right hand, and he put his rather large and sinewy brown hand into it. The small hand folded

itself upon his in a curious way—feeble and fierce at the same time, it seemed—and held him. The hand was warm, almost hot, and soft, and dry as a fire is dry—so dry that it hisses angrily if water is thrown on it.

"Now, you are trying to get away," she said. "And of course you can, but——"

Dion made a movement as if to pull away his hand, but Mrs. Clarke retained it. How was that? He scarcely knew; in fact he did not know. She did not seem to be doing anything definite to keep him, did not squeeze or grip his hand, or cling to it; but his hand remained in hers nevertheless.

"There," she said, letting his hand go. "That is how Stamboul holds. Do you understand?"

Mrs. Chetwinde's vague eyes had been on them during this little episode. Dion had had time to see that, and to think, 'Now, at such a time, no one but an absolutely innocent woman would do in public what Mrs. Clarke is doing to me.' Mrs. Chetwinde, he felt sure, full of all worldly knowledge, must be thinking the very same thing.

"Yes," he said. "I think I do. But I wonder whether it could hold me like that."

"I know it could."

"May I ask how you know?"

"Why not? Simply by my observation of you."

Dion remembered the swift grave look of consideration she had given to him as he came into the room. Something almost combative rose up in him, and he entered into an argument with her, in the course of which he was carried away into the revelation of his mental comparison between Constantinople and Greece, a comparison into which entered a moral significance. He even spoke of the Christian significance of the Hermes of Olympia. Mrs. Clarke listened to him with a very still, and apparently a very deep, attention.

"I've been in Greece," she said simply, when he had finished.

"You didn't feel at all as I did, as I do?"

"You may know Greece, but you don't know Stamboul," she said quietly.

"If you had shown it to me I might feel very differently," Dion said, with a perhaps slightly banal politeness.

And yet he did not feel entirely banal as he said it.

"Come out again and I will show it to you," she said.

She was almost staring at him, at his chest and shoulders, not at his face, but her eyes still kept their unself-conscious and almost oddly impersonal look.

"You are going back there?"

"Of course, when my case is over."

Dion felt very much surprised. He knew that Mrs. Clarke's husband was accredited to the British Embassy at Constantinople; that the scandal about her was connected with that city and with its neighbourhood—Therapia, Prinkipo, and other near places; that both the co-respondents named in the suit lived there. Whichever way the case went, surely Constantinople must be very disagreeable to Mrs. Clarke from now onwards. And yet she was going back there, and apparently intended to take up her life there again. She evidently either saw or divined his surprise, for she added in the husky voice:

"Guilt may be governed by circumstances. I suppose it is full of alarms. But I think an innocent woman who allows herself to be driven out of a place she loves by a false accusation is merely a coward. But all this is very uninteresting to you. The point is, I shall soon be settled down again at Constantinople, and ready to make you see it as it really is, if you ever return there."

She had spoken without hardness or any pugnacity; there was no defiance in her manner, which was perfectly simple and straightforward.

"Your moral comparison between Constantinople and Greece—it isn't fair, by the way, to compare a city with a country—doesn't interest me at all. People can be disgusting anywhere. Greece is no better than Turkey. It has a wonderfully delicate, pure atmosphere; but that doesn't influence the morals of the population. Fine Greek art is the purest art in the world; but that doesn't mean that the men who created it had only pure thoughts or lived only pure lives. I never read morals into art, although I'm English, and it's the old hopeless English way to do that. The man who made Echo"—she turned her large eyes towards the statuette—"may have been an evil liver. In fact, I believe he was. But Echo is an exquisite pure bit of art."

Dion thought of Rosamund's words about Praxiteles as they sat before the Hermes. His Rosamund and Mrs. Clarke were mentally at opposite poles; yet they were both good women.

"My friend Daventry would agree with you, I know," he said.

"He's a clever and a very dear little man. Who's that coming in?"

Dion looked and saw Canon Wilton. He told Mrs. Clarke who it was.

"Enid told me he was coming. I should like to know him."

"Shall I go and tell him so?"

"Presently. How's your baby? I'm told you've got a baby."

Dion actually blushed. Mrs. Clarke gazed at the blush, and no doubt thoroughly understood it, but she did not smile, or look arch, or full of feminine understanding.

"It's very well, thank you. It's just like other babies."

"So was mine. Babies are always said to be wonderful, and never are. And we love ours chiefly because they aren't. I hate things with wings growing out of their shoulders. My boy's a very naughty boy."

They talked about the baby, and then about Mrs. Clarke's son of ten; and then Canon Wilton came up, shook hands warmly with Dion, and was introduced by Mrs. Chetwinde to Mrs. Clarke.

Presently, from the other side of the room where he was standing with Esmé Darlington, Dion saw them in conversation; saw Mrs. Clarke's eyes fixed on the Canon's almost fiercely sincere face.

"It's going to be an abominable case," murmured Mr. Darlington in Dion's ear. "We must all stand round her."

"I can't imagine how anyone could think such a woman guilty," said Dion.

"It has all come about through her unconventionality." He pulled his beard and lifted his ragged eyebrows. "It really is much wiser for innocent people, such as Cynthia, to keep a tight hold on the conventions. They have their uses. They have their place in the scheme. But she never could see it, and look at the result."

"But then don't you think she'll win?"

"No one can tell."

"In any case, she tells me she's going back to live at Constantinople."

"Madness! Sheer madness!" said Mr. Darlington, almost piteously. "I shall beg her not to."

Dion suppressed a smile. That day he had gained the impression that Mrs. Clarke had a will of iron.

When he went up to say good-bye to her, Daventry had already gone; he said he had work to do on the case.

"May I wish you success?" Dion ventured to say, as he took her hand.

"Thank you," she answered. "I think you must go in for athletic exercises, don't you?"

Her eyes were fixed on the breadth of his chest, and then travelled to his strong, broad shoulders.

"Yes, I'm very keen on them."

"I want my boy to go in for them. It's so important to be healthy."

"Rather!"

He felt the Stamboul touch in her soft, hot hand. As he let it go, he added:

"I can give you the address of a first-rate instructor if your boy ever wants to be physically trained. I go to him. His name's Jenkins."

"Thank you."

She was still looking at his chest and shoulders. The expression of distress in her eyes seemed to be deepening. But a tall man, Sir John Killigrew, one of her adherents, spoke to her, and she turned to give him her complete attention.

"I'll walk with you, if you're going," said Canon Wilton's strong voice in Dion's ear.

"That's splendid. I'll just say good-bye to Mrs. Chetwinde."

He found her by the tea-table with three or four men and two very smart women. As he came up one of the latter was saying:

"It's all Lady Ermyntrude's fault. She always hated Cynthia, and she has a heart of stone."

The case again!

"Oh, are you going?" said Mrs. Chetwinde.

She got up and came away from the tea-table.

"D'you like Cynthia Clarke?" she asked.

"Yes, very much. She interests me."

"Ah?"

She looked at him, and seemed about to say something, but did not speak.

"You saw her take my hand," he said, moved by a sudden impulse.

"Did she?"

"We were talking about Stamboul. She did it to show me——" He broke off. "I saw you felt, as I did, that no one but a through and through innocent woman could have done it, just now—like that, I mean."

"Of course Cynthia is innocent," Mrs. Chetwinde said, rather coldly and very firmly. "There's Canon Wilton waiting for you."

She turned away, but did not go back to the tea-table; as Dion went out of the room he saw her sitting down on the red sofa by Mrs. Clarke.

Canon Wilton and he walked slowly away from the house. The Canon, who had some heart trouble of which he never spoke, was not allowed to walk fast; and to-day he was tired after his sermon at the Abbey. He inquired earnestly about Rosamund and the child, and seemed made happy by the good news Dion was able to give him.

"Has it made all life seem very different to you?" he asked.

Dion acknowledged that it had.

"I was half frightened at the thought of the change which was coming," he said. "We were so very happy as we were, you see."

The Canon's intense grey eyes shot a glance at him, which he felt rather than saw, in the evening twilight.

"I hope you'll be even happier now."

"It will be a different sort of happiness now."

"I think children bind people together more often than not. There are cases when it's not so, but I don't think yours is likely to be one of them."

"Oh no."

"Is it a good-looking baby?"

"No, really it's not. Even Rosamund thinks that. D'you know, so far she's marvellously reasonable in her love."

"That's splendid," said Canon Wilton, with a strong ring in his voice. "An unreasonable love is generally a love with something rotten at its roots."

Dion stood still.

"Oh, is that true really?"

The Canon paused beside him. They were in Eaton Square, opposite to St. Peter's.

"I think so. But I hate anything that approaches what I call mania. Religious mania, for instance, is abhorrent to me, and, I should think, displeasing to God. Any mania entering into a love clouds that purity which is the greatest beauty of love. Mania—it's detestable!"

He spoke almost with a touch of heat, and put his hand on Dion's shoulder.

"Beware of it, my boy."

"Yes."

They walked on, talking of other things. A few minutes before they parted they spoke of Mrs. Clarke.

"Did you know her before to-day?" asked the Canon.

"No. I'd never even seen her. How dreadful for her to have to face such a case."

"Yes, indeed."

"The fact that she's innocent gives her a great pull, though. I realized what a pull when I was having a talk with her."

"I don't know much about the case," was all that the Canon said. "I hope justice will be done in it when it comes on."

Dion thought that there was something rather implacable in his voice.

"I don't believe Mrs. Clarke doubts that."

"Did she say so?" asked Canon Wilton.

"No. But I felt that she expected to win—almost knew she would win."

"I see. She has confidence in the result."

"She seems to have."

"Women often have more confidence in difficult moments then we men. Well, here I must leave you."

He held out his big, unwavering hand to Dion.

"Good-bye. God bless you both, and the child, whether it's plain or not. One good thing's added to us when we start rather ill-favoured; the chance of growing into something well-favoured."

He gripped Dion's hand and walked slowly, but powerfully, away.

## CHAPTER IV

AS Dion had said, the baby was an ordinary baby. "In looks," the nurse remarked, "he favours his papa." Certainly in this early stage of his career the baby had little of the beauty and charm of Rosamund. As his head was practically bald, his forehead, which was wrinkled as if by experience and the troubles of years, looked abnormally high. His face, full of puckers, was rather red;

his nose meant very little as yet ; his mouth, with perpetually moving lips, was the home of bubbles. His eyes were blue, and looked large in his extremely small countenance, which was often decorated with an expression of mild inquiry. This expression, however, sometimes changed abruptly to a network of wrath, in which every feature, and even the small bald head, became involved. Then the minute feet made feeble dabs, or stabs, at the atmosphere ; the tiny fists doubled themselves and wandered to and fro as if in search of the enemy ; and a voice came forth out of the temple, very personal and very intense, to express the tempest of the soul.

"Hark at him!" said the nurse. "He knows already what he wants and what he *don't* want."

And Rosamund, listening as only a mother can listen, shook her head over him, trying to condemn the rage, but enjoying the strength of her child in the way of mothers, to whom the baby's roar perhaps brings the thought, "What a fine, bold man he'll be some day." If Rosamund had such a thought the nurse encouraged it with her, "He's got a proud spirit already, ma'am. He's not to be put upon. Have his way he will, and I don't altogether blame him." Nor, be sure, did Rosamund altogether blame the young varmint for anything. Perhaps in his tiny fisticuffs and startlingly fierce cries she divined the Doric, in embryo, as it were; perhaps when "little master" shrieked she thought of the columns of the Parthenon.

But Dion had told the truth to Canon Wilton when he had said that Rosamund was marvellously reasonable, so far, in her love for her baby son. The admirable sanity, the sheer healthiness of outlook which Dion loved in her did not desert her now. To Dion it seemed that in the very calmness and good sense of her love she showed its great depth, showed that already she was thinking of her child's soul as well as of his little body.

Dion felt the beginnings of a change in Rosamund, but he did not find either her or himself suddenly and radically changed by the possession of a baby. He had thought that perhaps as mother and father they would both feel abruptly much older than before, even perhaps old. It was not so. Often Dion gazed at the baby as he bubbled and cooed, sneezed with an air of angry astonishment, stared at nothing with a look of shallow surmise, or, composing his puckers, slept, and Dion still felt young, even very young, and not at all like a father.

"I'm sure," he once said to Rosamund, "women feel much more like mothers when they have a baby than men feel like fathers."

"I feel like a mother all over," she replied, bending above the child. "In every least little bit of me."

"Then do you feel completely changed?"

"Completely, utterly."

Dion sat still for a moment gazing at her. She felt his look, perhaps, for she lifted her head, and her eyes went from the baby to him.

"What is it, Rosamund? What are you considering?"

"Well——" She hesitated. "Perhaps no one could quite understand, but I feel a sense of release."

"Release! From what?"

Again she hesitated; then she looked once more at the child almost as if she wished to gain something from his helplessness. At last she said:

"Dion, as you've given me *him*, I'll tell you. Very often in the past I've had an urgent desire some day to enter into the religious life."

"D'you—d'you mean to become a Roman Catholic and a nun?" he exclaimed, feeling, absurdly perhaps, almost afraid and half indignant.

"No. I've never wished to change my religion. There are Anglican sisterhoods, you know."

"But your singing!"

"I only intended to sing for a time. Then some day, when I felt quite ready, I meant——"

"But you married me!" he interrupted.

"Yes. So you see I gave it all up."

"But you said it was the child which had brought you a sensation of release!"

"Perhaps you have never been the prisoner of a desire which threatens to dominate your soul for ever," she said, quietly evading his point and looking down, so that he could not see her eyes. "Look, he's waking!"

Surely she had moved abruptly and the movement had awakened the child. She began playing with him, and the conversation was broken.

The Clarke trial came on in May, when Robin was becoming almost elderly, having already passed no less than ten weeks in the midst of this wicked world. On the day before it opened, Daventry made Dion promise to come into court at least once to hear some of the evidence.

"A true friend would be there every day," he urged—"to back up his old chum."

"Business!" returned Dion laconically.

"What's your real reason against it?"

"Well, Rosamund hates this kind of case. I spoke to her about it the other day."

"What did she say?"

"That she was delighted you had something to do, and that she hoped, if Mrs. Clarke were innocent, she'd win. She pities her for being dragged through all this mud."

"Yes?"

"She said at the end that she hoped I wouldn't think her unsympathetic if she neither talked about the case nor read about it. She hates filling her mind with ugly details and horrible suggestions."

"I see."

"You know, Guy, Rosamund thinks—she's told me so more than once—that the mind and the soul are very sensitive, and that—that they ought to be watched over, and—and taken great care of."

Dion looked rather uncomfortable as he finished. It was one thing to speak of such matters with Rosamund, and quite another to touch on them with a man, even a man who was a trusted friend.

"Perhaps you'd rather not come at all?"

"No, no. I'll come once. You know how keen I am on your making a good start."

Daventry took him at his word, and got him a seat beside Mrs. Chetwinde on the third day of the trial, when Mrs. Clarke's cross-examination, begun on the previous day, was continued by Sir Edward Jeffson, Beadon Clarke's leading counsel.

Dion told Rosamund where he was going when he left the house in the morning.

"I hope it will go well for poor Mrs. Clarke," she said kindly, but perhaps rather indifferently.

She had not looked at the reports of the case in the papers, and had not discussed its progress with Dion. He was not sorry for that. It was a horrible case, full of abominable allegations and suggestions such as he would have hated to discuss with his Rosamund. As he stood in the little hall of their house, which was delicately scented with lavender and lit by pale sunshine, bidding her good-bye, he realized

the impossibility of such a woman as she was ever being "mixed up" in such a trial. Simply that couldn't happen, he thought. Instinct would keep her far from every suggestion of a possible impurity. He felt certain that Mrs. Clarke was innocent, but, as he looked into Rosamund's honest brown eyes, he thought that Mrs. Clarke must have been singularly imprudent. He remembered how she had held his hand in Mrs. Chetwinde's drawing-room. Wisdom and unwisdom; he compared them: the one was a builder up, the other a destroyer of beauty—the beauty that is in every completely sane and perfectly poised life.

"Rose," he said, leaning forward to kiss his wife, "I think you are very wise."

"Why wise all of a sudden?" she asked, smiling.

"You keep the door of your life."

He glanced round at the little hall, simple, fresh, with a few white roses in a blue pot, the pale sunshine lying on the polished floor of wood, the small breeze coming in almost affectionately between snowy curtains. Purity—everything seemed to whisper of that, to imply that; simplicity ruling, complexity ruled out.

And then he was sitting in the crowded court, breathing bad air, hearing foul suggestions, watching strained or hateful faces, surrounded by people who were attracted by ugly things as vultures are attracted by the stench of dead and decaying bodies. At first he loathed being there; presently, however, he became interested, then almost fascinated by his surroundings and by the drama which was being played slowly out in the midst of them.

Daventry, in wig and gown, looked tremendously legal and almost severe in his tense gravity. Sir John Addington, his leader, a man of great fame, was less tense in his watchfulness, amazingly at his ease with the Court, and on smiling terms with the President, who, full of worldly and underworldly knowledge, held the balance of justice with an unwavering firmness. The jury looked startlingly commonplace, smug and sleepy, despite the variety of type almost inevitably presented by twelve human beings. Not one of them looked a rascal; not one of them looked an actively good man. The intense Englishness of them hit one in the face like a well-directed blow from a powerful fist. And they had to give the verdict on this complex drama of Stamboul! How much they would have to tell their wives presently! Their sense of their unusual importance pushed

through their smugness heavily, like a bulky man in broadcloth shoving through a dull crowd.

Mrs. Clarke occasionally glanced at them with an air of almost distressed inquiry, as if she had never seen such cabbages before, and was wondering about their grey matter. Her life in Stamboul must have effected changes in her. She looked almost exotic in this court, despite the simplicity of her gown, her unpretending little hat ; as if her mind, perhaps, had become exotic. But she certainly did not look wicked. Dion was struck again by the strong mentality of her and by her haggardness. To him she seemed definitely a woman of mind, not at all an animal woman. When he gazed at her he felt that he was gazing at mind rather than at body. Just before she went into the box she met his eyes. She stared at him, as if carefully and strongly considering him ; then she nodded. He bowed, feeling uncomfortable, feeling indeed almost a brute.

" She'll think I've come out of filthy curiosity," he thought, looking round at the greedy faces of the crowd.

No need to ask why those faces were there.

He felt still more uncomfortable when Mrs. Clarke was in the witness-box, and Sir Edward Jeffson took up the cross-examination which he had begun late in the afternoon of the previous day.

Dion had very seldom been in a Court of Justice, and had never before been in the Divorce Court. As the cross-examination of Mrs. Clarke lengthened out he felt as if his clothes, and the clothes of all the human beings who crowded about him, were being ruthlessly stripped off, as if an ugly and abominable nakedness were gradually appearing. The shame of it all was very hateful to him ; and yet—yes, he couldn't deny it—there was a sort of dreadful fascination in it, too.

The two co-respondents, Hadi Bey and Aristide Dumeny of the French Embassy in Constantinople, were in court, sitting not far from Dion, to whom Mrs. Chetwinde, less vague than, but quite as self-possessed as, usual, pointed them out.

Both were young men. Hadi Bey, who of course wore the fez, was a fine specimen of the smart, alert, cosmopolitan and cultivated Turk of modern days. There was a peculiar look of vividness and brightness about him, in his piercing dark eyes, in his red lips, in his healthy and manly face with its rosy brown complexion and its powerful decided chin. He had none of the sleepiness and fatalistic languor of the fat

hubble-bubble smoking Turk of caricature. The whole of him looked aristocratic, energetic, perfectly poised and absolutely self-possessed. Many of the women in court glanced at him without any distaste.

Aristide Dumeny was almost strangely different—an ashy-pale, dark-eyed, thin and romantic-visaged man, stamped with a curious expression of pain and fatalism. He looked as if he had seen much, dreamed many dreams, and suffered not a little. There was in his face something slightly contemptuous, as if, intellectually, he seldom gazed up at any man. He watched Mrs. Clarke in the box with an enigmatic closeness of attention which seemed wholly impersonal, even when she was replying to hideous questions about himself. That he had an interesting personality was certain. When his eyes rested on the twelve jurymen he smiled ever so faintly. It seemed to him, perhaps, absurd that they should have power over the future of the woman in the witness-box.

That woman showed an extraordinary self-possession which touched dignity but which never descended to insolence. Despite her obvious cleverness and mental resource she preserved a certain simplicity. She did not pose as a passionate innocent, or assume any forced airs of supreme virtue. She presented herself rather as a woman of the world who was careless of the conventions, because she thought of them as chains which prevented free movement and were destructive of genuine liberty. She acknowledged that she had been a great deal with Hadi Bey and Dumeny, that she had often made long excursions with each of them on foot, on horseback, in caïques, that she had had them to dinner, separately, on many occasions in a little pavilion which stood at the end of her husband's garden and looked upon the Bosporus. These dinners had frequently taken place when her husband was away from home. Monsieur Dumeny was a good musician and had sometimes sung and played to her till late in the night. Hadi Bey had sometimes been her guide in Constantinople and had given to her the freedom of his strange and mysterious city of Stamboul. With him she had visited the mosques, with him she had explored the bazaars, with him she had sunk down in the strange and enveloping melancholy of the vast Turkish cemeteries which are protected by forests of cypresses. All this she acknowledged without the least discomposure. One of her remarks to the cross-examining counsel was this :

"You suggest that I have been very imprudent. I

answer that I am not able to live what the conventional call a prudent life. Such a life would be a living death to me."

"Kindly confine yourself to answering my questions," retorted Counsel harshly. "I suggest that you were far more than imprudent. I suggest that when you and Hadi Bey remained together in that pavilion on the Bosporus until midnight, until after midnight, you——" and then followed another hideous accusation, which, gazing with her observant eyes at the brick-red shaven face of her accuser, Mrs. Clarke quietly denied. She never showed temper. Now and then she gave indications of a sort of cold disgust or faint surprise. But there were no outraged airs of virtue. A slight disdain was evidently more natural to the temperament of this woman than any fierceness of protestation. Once when Counsel said, "I shall ask the jury to infer"—something abominable, Mrs. Clarke tranquilly rejoined:

"Whatever they infer it won't alter the truth."

Daventry moved his shoulders. Dion was certain that he considered this remark ill-advised. The jury, however, at whom Mrs. Clarke gazed in the short silence which followed, seemed, Dion thought, impressed by her firmness. The luncheon interval prevented Counsel from saying anything further just then, and Mrs. Clarke stepped down from the box.

"Isn't she wonderful?"

Dion heard this murmur, which did not seem to be addressed to any particular person. It had come from Mrs. Chetwinde, who now got up and went to speak to Mrs. Clarke. The whole court was in movement. Dion went out to have a hasty lunch with Daventry.

"A pity she said that!" Daventry said in a low voice to Dion, hitching up his gown. "Juries like to be deferred to."

"I believe she impressed them by her independence."

"Do you, though? She's marvellously intelligent. Perhaps she knows more of men, even of jurymen, than I do."

At lunch they discussed the case. Daventry had had two or three chances given to him by Sir John Addington, and thought he had done quite well.

"Do you think Mrs. Clarke will win?" said Dion.

"I know she's innocent, but I can't tell. She's so infernally unconventional and a jury's so infernally conventional that I can't help being afraid."

Dion thought of his Rosamund's tranquil wisdom.

"I think Mrs. Clarke's very clever," he said. "But I suppose she isn't very wise."

"I'll tell you what it is, old Dion; she prefers life to wisdom."

"Well, but——" Dion began.

But he stopped. Now he knew Mrs. Clarke a little better, from her own evidence, he knew just what Daventry meant. He looked upon the life of unwisdom, and he was able to feel its fascination. There were scents in it that lured, and there were colours that tempted; in its night there was music; about it lay mystery, shadows, and silver beams of the moon shining between cypresses like black towers. It gave out a call to which, perhaps, very few natures of men were wholly deaf. The unwise life! Almost for the first time Dion considered it with a deep curiosity.

He considered it more attentively, more curiously, during the afternoon, when Mrs. Clarke's cross-examination was continued.

It was obvious that during this trial two women were being presented to the judge and jury, the one a greedy and abominably secret and clever sensualist, who hid her mania beneath a cloak of intellectuality, the other a genuine intellectual, whose mental appetites far outweighed the appetites of her body, who was, perhaps, a sensualist, but a sensualist of the spirit and not of the flesh. Which of these two women was the real Cynthia Clarke? The jury would eventually give their decision, but it might not be in accordance with fact. Meanwhile, the horrible unclothing process was ruthlessly proceeded with. But already Dion was becoming accustomed to it. Perhaps Mrs. Clarke's self-possession helped him to assimilate the nauseous food which was offered to him.

Beadon Clarke was in court, and had been pointed out to Dion, an intellectual and refined-looking man, bald, with good features, and a gentle, but now pained, expression; obviously a straight and aristocratic fellow. Beside him sat his mother, that Lady Ermyntrude who, it was said, had forced on the trial. She sat upright, her eyes fixed on her daughter-in-law, a rather insignificant small woman, not very well dressed, young looking, with hair done exactly in Queen Alexandra's way, and crowned with a black toque.

Dion noticed that she had a very firm mouth and chin. She did not look actively hostile as she gazed at the witness,

but merely attentive—deeply, concentratedly attentive. Mrs. Clarke never glanced towards her.

Perhaps, whatever Lady Ermyntrude had believed hitherto, she was now beginning to wonder whether her conception of her son's wife had been a wrong one, was beginning to ask herself whether she had divined the nature of the soul inhabiting the body which now stood up before her.

About an hour before the close of the sitting the heat in court became almost suffocating, and the Judge told Mrs. Clarke she might continue her evidence sitting down. She refused this favour.

"I'm not at all tired, my lord," she said.

"She's made of iron," Mrs. Chetwinde murmured to Dion. "Though she generally looks like a corpse. She was haggard even as a girl."

"Did you know her then?" he whispered.

"I've known her all my life."

Daventry wiped his brow with a large pocket-handkerchief, performing the action legally. One of the jurymen, who was too fat, and had something of the expression of a pug dog, opened his mouth and rolled slightly in his seat. The cross-examination became with every moment more disagreeable. Beadon Clarke never lifted his eyes from his knees. All the women in court, except Mrs. Chetwinde and Mrs. Clarke, were looking strangely alive and conscious. Dion had forgotten everything except Stamboul and the life of unwisdom. Suppose Mrs. Clarke had lived the life imputed to her by Counsel, suppose she really were a consummately clever and astoundingly ingenious humbug, driven, as many human beings are driven, by a dominating vice which towered over her life issuing commands she had not the strength to resist, how had it profited her? Had she had great rewards in it? Had she been led down strange ways guided by fascination bearing the torch from which spring coloured fires? Good women sometimes, perhaps oftener than many people realize, look out of the window and try to catch a glimpse of the world of the wicked women, asking themselves, "Is it worth while? Is their time so much better than mine? Am I missing—missing?" And they shut the window—for fear. Far away, turning the corner of some dark alley, they have seen the coloured gleam of the torch.

Rosamund would never do that—would never even want to do that. She was not one of the good women who love to take just a peep at evil "because one ought to know some-

thing of the trials and difficulties of those less fortunately circumstanced than oneself."

But, for the moment, Dion had quite forgotten his Rosamund. She was in England, but he was in Stamboul, hearing the waters of the Bosporus lapping at the foot of Mrs. Clarke's garden pavilion, while Dumeny played to her as the moon came up to shine upon the sweet waters of Asia ; or sitting under the plane trees of the Pigeon Mosque, while Hadi Bey showed her how to write an Arabic love-letter—to somebody in the air, of course. In this trial he felt the fascination of Constantinople as he had never felt it when he was in Constantinople ; but he felt, too, that only those who strayed deliberately from the beaten paths could ever capture the full fascination of the divided city, which looks to Europe and to Asia, and is set along the way of the sea.

Whether innocent or guilty, Mrs. Clarke had certainly done that. He watched her with a growing interest. How very much she must know that he did not know. Then he glanced at Hadi Bey, who still sat up alertly, who still looked bright and vivid, intelligent, ready for anything, a man surely with muscles of steel and a courageous robust nature, and at Aristide Dumeny. Upon the latter his eyes rested for a long time. When at last he again looked at Mrs. Clarke he had formed the definite impression that Dumeny was corrupt—an interesting man, a clever, probably a romantic as well as a cynical man, but certainly corrupt.

Didn't that tell against Mrs. Clarke ?

She was now being questioned about a trip at night in a caïque with Hadi Bey down the sweet waters of Asia where willows lean over the stream. Mrs. Chetwinde's pale eyes were fastened upon her. Beadon Clarke bent his head a little lower as, in her husky voice, his wife said that he knew of the expedition, had apparently smiled upon her unconventionalities, knowing how entirely free she was from the ugly bias towards vice attributed to her by Counsel.

Lady Ermyntrude Clarke shot a glance at her son, and her firm mouth became firmer.

The willows bent over the sweet waters in the warm summer night ; the Albanian boatmen were singing.

" She must have had wonderful times ! "

The whisper came from an unseen woman sitting just behind Dion. His mind echoed the thought she had expressed. Now the Judge was rising from the bench and

bowing to the Court ; Mrs. Clarke was stepping down from the witness-box ; Dumeny, his eyes half closed, was brushing his shining silk hat with the sleeve of his coat ; Beadon Clarke was leaning to speak to his mother.

The Court was adjourned.

As Dion got up he felt the heat as if it were heat from a furnace. His face and his body were burning.

" Come and speak to Cynthia, and take us to tea somewhere—can you ? " said Mrs. Chetwinde.

" Of course, with pleasure."

" Your Rosamund——? "

Her eyes were on him for a moment.

" She won't expect me at any particular time."

" Mr. Daventry can come too."

Dion never forgot their difficult exit from the court. It made him feel ashamed for humanity, for the crowd which frantically pressed to stare at a woman because perhaps she had done things which were considered by all right-minded people to be disgusting. Mrs. Clarke and her little party of friends had to be helped by the police. When at length they were driving away towards Claridge's Hotel, Dion was able once more to meet the eyes of his companions, and again he was amazed at the self-possession of Mrs. Clarke. Really she seemed as composed, as completely mistress of herself, as when he had first seen her standing near the statue of Echo in the drawing-room of Mrs. Chetwinde.

" You haven't been in court before to-day, have you ? " she said to Dion.

" No."

" Why did you come to-day ? "

" Well, I——" He hesitated. " I promised Mr. Daventry to come to-day."

" That was it ! " said Mrs. Clarke, and she looked out of the window.

Dion felt rather uncomfortable as he spoke to Mrs. Chetwinde and left further conversation with Mrs. Clarke to Daventry ; but when they were all in a quiet corner of the tearoom at Claridge's, a tea-table before them and a band playing softly at a distance, he was more at his ease. The composure of Mrs. Clarke perhaps conveyed itself to him. She spoke of the case quite naturally, as a guilty woman surely could not possibly have spoken of it—showing no venom, making no attack upon her accusers.

" It's all a mistake," she said, " arising out of stupidity,

out of the most widespread and, perhaps, the most pitiable and dangerous lack in human nature."

"And what's that?" asked Daventry, rather eagerly.

"I expect you know."

He shook his head.

"Don't you?" she asked of Dion, spreading thinly some butter over a piece of dry toast.

"I'm afraid I don't."

"Cynthia means the lack of power to read character, the lack of the psychological instinct," drifted from the lips of Mrs. Chetwinde.

"Three-quarters of the misunderstandings and miseries of the world come from that," said Mrs. Clarke, looking at the now buttered toast. "If my mother-in-law and my husband had any psychological faculty they would never have mistaken my unconventionality, which I shall never give up, for common, and indeed very vulgar, sinfulness."

"Confusing the pastel with the oleograph," dropped out Mrs. Chetwinde, looking abstractedly at an old red woman in a turret of ostrich plumes, who was spread out on the other side of the room before a plate of cakes.

"You are sure Lady Ermyntrude didn't understand?" said Daventry, with a certain sharp legality of manner.

"You mean that she might be wicked instead of only stupid?"

"Well, yes. I suppose it does come to that."

"Believe me, Mr. Daventry, she's a quite honest stupid woman. She honestly thinks that I'm a horrible creature."

And Mrs. Clarke began to bite the crisp toast with her lovely teeth. Mrs. Chetwinde's eyes dwelt on her for a brief instant with, Dion thought, a rather peculiar look which he could not quite understand. It had, perhaps, a hint of hardness, or of cold admiration, something of that kind, in it.

"Tell me some more about the baby," was Mrs. Clarke's next remark, addressed to Dion. "I want to get away for a minute into a happy domestic life. And yours is that, I know."

How peculiarly haggard, and yet how young she looked as she said that! She added:

"If the case ends as I feel sure it will, I hope your wife and I shall get to know each other. I hear she's the most delightful woman in London, and extraordinarily beautiful. Isn't she?"

"I think she is beautiful," Dion said simply.

And then they talked about Robin, while Mrs. Chetwinde and Daventry discussed some question of the day. Before they parted Dion could not help saying:

"I want to ask you something."

"Yes?"

"Why do you feel sure that the trial will end as it ought to end? Surely the lack of the psychological instinct is peculiarly abundant—if a lack can be abundant!"—he smiled, almost laughed, a little deprecatingly—"in a British jury?"

"And so you think they're likely to go wrong in their verdict?"

"Doesn't it rather follow?"

She stared at him, and her eyes were, or looked, even more widely opened than usual. After a long pause she said:

"You wish to frighten me."

She got up, and began to draw on her dove-coloured Swedish kid gloves.

"Tippie," she said to Mrs. Chetwinde, "I must go home now and have a little rest."

Only then did Dion realize how marvellously she was bearing a tremendous strain. He began to admire her prodigiously.

When he said good-bye to her under the great porch he couldn't help asking:

"Are your nerves of steel?"

She leaned forward in the brougham.

"If your muscles are of iron."

"My muscles!" he said.

"Haven't you educated them?"

"Oh—yes."

"And perhaps I've educated my nerves."

Mrs. Chetwinde's spirited horses began to prance and show temper. Mrs. Clarke sat back. As the carriage moved away, Dion saw Mrs. Chetwinde's eyes fixed upon him. They looked at that moment not at all vague. If they had not been her eyes, he would have been inclined to think them piercing. But, of course, Mrs. Chetwinde's eyes could never be that.

"How does one educate one's nerves, Guy?" asked Dion, as the two friends walked away.

"By being defendant in a long series of divorce cases, I should say."

"Has Mrs. Clarke ever been in another case of this kind?"

"Good heavens, no. If she had, even I couldn't believe in her innocence, as I do now."

"Then where did she get her education?"

"Where do women get things, old Dion? It seems to me sometimes straight from God, and sometimes straight from the devil."

Dion's mental comment on this was, "What about Mrs. Clarke?" But he did not utter it.

Before he left Daventry, he was pledged to be in court on the last day of the case, when the verdict would be given. He wished to go to the court again on the morrow, but the thought of Rosamund decided him not to do this; he would, he knew, feel almost ashamed in telling her that the divorce court, at this moment, fascinated him, that he longed, or almost longed, to follow the coloured fires of a certain torch down further shadowy alleys of the unwise life. He felt quite sure that Mrs. Clarke was an innocent woman, but she had certainly been very unconventional indeed in her conduct. He remembered the almost stern strength in her husky voice when she had said "my unconventionality, *which I shall never give up*." So even this hideous and widely proclaimed scandal would not induce her to bow in the future before the conventional gods. She really was an extraordinary woman. What would Rosamund think of her? If she won her case she evidently meant to know Rosamund. Of course, there could be nothing against that. If she lost the case, naturally there could never be any question of such an acquaintance; he knew instinctively that she would never suggest it. Whatever she was, or was not, she was certainly a woman of the world.

That evening, when he reached home, he found Rosamund sitting in the nursery in the company of Robin and the nurse. The window was partially open. Rosamund believed in plenty of air for her child, and no "cosseting"; she laughed to scorn, but genially, the nurse's prejudice against "the night air."

"My child," she said, "must get accustomed to night as well as day, Nurse—and the sooner the better." So now "Master Robin" was played upon by a little wind from Westminster. He seemed in no way alarmed by it. This evening he was serene, and when his father entered the room he assumed his expression of mild inquiry, vaguely agitated his

small rose-coloured fists, and blew forth a welcoming bubble.

Dion was touched at the sight.

"Little rogue!" he said, bending over Robin. "Little, little rogue!"

Robin raised his, as yet scarcely defined, eyebrows, stared tremendously hard at the nursery atmosphere, puffed out his wet lips and gurgled, at the same time wagging his head, now nicely covered with silky fair hair, or down, whichever you chose to call it.

"He knows his papa, ma'am, and that he does, a boy!" said the nurse, who approved of Dion, and had said below stairs that he was "as good a husband as ever wore shoe-leather."

"Of course he does," said Rosamund softly. "Babies have plenty of intelligence of a kind, and I think it's a darling kind."

Dion sat down beside her, and they both bent over Robin in the gathering twilight, while the nurse went softly out of the room.

Dion had quite forgotten the Clarke case.

## CHAPTER V

THREE days later Daventry called in Little Market Street early, and was shown into the dining-room where he found Rosamund alone at the breakfast-table.

"Do forgive me for bursting in upon the boiled eggs," he said, looking unusually excited. "I'm off almost directly to the Law Courts and I want to take Dion with me. It's the last day of Mrs. Clarke's case. We expect the verdict some time this evening. I dare say the court will sit late. Where's Dion?"

"He's just coming down. We were both disturbed in the night, so we slept later than usual."

"Disturbed? Burglars? Fire?"

"No; Robin's not at all well."

"I say! I'm sorry for that. What is it?"

"He's had a very bad throat and been feverish, poor

little chap. But I think he's better this morning. The doctor came."

"You'll never be one of the fussy mothers."

"I hope not," she said, rather gravely; "I'm not fond of them. Here's Dion."

Daventry sat with them while they breakfasted, and Dion agreed to keep his promise and go to the court.

"I told Uncle Biron I must be away from business to hear the summing-up," he said. "I'll send a telegram to the office. Do you think it will be all right for Mrs. Clarke?"

"She's innocent, but nobody can say. It depends so much on the summing-up."

Dion glanced at Rosamund.

"You mustn't think I'm going to turn into an idler, Rose. This is a very special occasion."

"I know. Mr. Daventry's first case."

"Haven't you followed it at all?" Daventry asked.

She shook her head.

"No, but I've been wishing you well all the same."

When the two men got up to go, Dion said:

"Rosamund!"

"What is it?"

"If Mrs. Clarke wins and is completely exonerated, I think she would like very much to make your acquaintance."

Rosamund looked surprised.

"What makes you think so?"

"Well, she said something to that effect the other day."

"She's a very interesting, clever woman," interposed Daventry, with sudden warmth.

"I'm sure she is. We must see. It's very kind of her. Poor woman! What dreadful anxiety she must be in to-day! You'll all be glad when it's over."

When the two friends were out in the sunshine, walking towards the Strand, Daventry said:

"Why is your wife against Mrs. Clarke?"

"She isn't. What makes you think so?"

"I'm quite sure she doesn't want to know her, even if she gets the verdict."

"Well, of course all this sort of thing is—it's very far away from Rosamund."

"You don't mean to say you doubt Mrs. Clarke?"

"No, but——"

"Surely if she's innocent she's as good as any other woman."

"I know, but—— I suppose it's like this: there are different ways of being good, and perhaps Mrs. Clarke's way isn't Rosamund's. In fact, we know it isn't."

Daventry said nothing more on the subject; he began to discuss the case in all its bearings, and presently dwelt upon the great power English judges have over the decisions of juries.

"Mrs. Clarke gave her evidence splendidly on the whole," he said. "And Hadi Bey made an excellent impression. My one fear is that fellow Aristide Dumeny. You didn't hear him, but, of course, you read his evidence. He was perfectly composed and as clever as he could be in the box, but I'm sure, somehow, the jury were against him."

"Why?"

"I hardly know. It may be something in his personality."

"I believe he's a beast," said Dion.

"There!" exclaimed Daventry, wrinkling his forehead. "If the Judge thinks as you do it may just turn things against us."

"Why did she make a friend of the fellow?"

"Because he's chock-full of talent and knowledge, and she loves both. Dion, my boy, the mind can play the devil with us as well as the body. But I hope—I hope for the right verdict. Anyhow I've done well, and shall get other cases out of this. The odd thing is that Mrs. Clarke's drained me dry of egoism. I care only to win for her. I couldn't bear to see her go out of court with a ruined reputation. My nerves are all on edge. If Mrs. Clarke loses, how d'you think she'll take it?"

"Standing up."

"I expect you're right. But I don't believe I shall take it standing. Perhaps some women make us men feel for them more than they feel for themselves. Don't look at me in court whatever you do."

They had arrived at the Law Courts. He hurried away.

Dion's place was again beside Mrs. Chetwinde, who looked unusually alive, and whose vagueness had been swept away by something—anxiety for her friend, perhaps, or the excitement of following day after day an unusually emotional *cause célèbre*.

Now, as Sir John Addington stood up to continue his speech on Mrs. Clarke's behalf, begun on the previous day, Mrs. Chetwinde leaned forward and fixed her eyes upon him, closing her fingers tightly on the fan she had brought with her.

Sir John spoke with an earnestness and conviction which at certain moments rose almost to passion, as he drew the portrait of a woman whose brilliant mind and innocent nature had led her into the unconventional conduct which her enemies now asserted was wickedness. Beadon Clarke's counsel had suggested that Mrs. Clarke was an abominable woman, brilliantly clever, exquisitely subtle, who had chosen as an armour against suspicion a bold pretence of simplicity and harmless unconventionality, but who was the prey of a hidden and ungovernable vice. He, Sir John, ventured to put forward for the jury's careful examination a very different picture. He made no secret of the fact that, from the point of view of the ordinary unconventional man or woman, Mrs. Clarke had often acted unwisely, and, with not too fine a sarcasm, he described for the jury the average existence of "a careful drab woman" in the watchful and eternally gossiping diplomatic world. Then he contrasted with it the life led by Mrs. Clarke in the wonderful city of Stamboul—a life "full of colour, of taste, of interest, of charm, of innocent, joyous and fragrant liberty. Which of us," he demanded, "would not in our souls prefer the latter life to the former? Which of us did not secretly long for the touch of romance, of strangeness, of beauty, to put something into our lives which they lacked? But we have not the moral courage to break our prison doors and to emerge into the nobler world."

"The dull, the drab, the platter-faced and platter-minded people," he said, in a passage which Dion was always to remember, "who go for ever bowed down beneath the heavy yoke of convention, are too often apt to think that everything charming, everything lively, everything unusual, everything which gives out, like sweet incense, a delicate aroma of strangeness, must be, somehow, connected with wickedness. Everything which deviates from their pattern must deviate towards the devil, according to them; every step taken away from the beaten path must be taken towards ultimate destruction. They have no conception of intimacies between women and men cemented not by similar lusts and similar vices, but by similar intellectual tastes and similar aspirations towards beauty. In colour such people always find blackness, in gaiety wickedness, in liberty license, in the sacred intimacies of the soul the hateful vices of the body. But you, gentlemen of the jury——"

His appeal to the twelve in the box at this moment was, perhaps, scarcely convincing. He addressed them as if, like

Mrs. Clarke and himself, they were enamoured of the unwise life, which is only unwise because we live in a world of censorious fools, and as if he knew it. The strange thing was that the jury were evidently impressed, if not carried away, by his appeal. They sat forward, stared at Sir John as if fascinated, and even began to assume little airs which were almost devil-may-care. But when, with a precise and deliberately cold acuteness, Sir John turned to the evidence adverse to his client, and began to tear it to shreds, they stared less, frowned, and showed by their expressions their efforts to be legal.

As soon as Sir John had finished his speech, the Court rose for the luncheon interval.

"Are you going out?" said Mrs. Chetwinde to Dion. "I've brought some horrible little sandwiches, and I shan't stir."

"I'm not hungry. I'll stay with you."

He sighed.

"What a crowd!" he said, looking round over the sea of hot, staring faces. "How horrid people look sometimes!"

"When they're feeling cruel."

She began to eat her sandwiches, which were tightly packed in a small silver box.

"Isn't Mrs. Clarke coming to-day?" Dion asked.

"Yes. I expect her in a moment. Esmé Darlington is bringing her."

"Mr. Darlington?"

"You're surprised?"

"Well, I should hardly have expected somehow that—I don't know."

"I do. But Esmé Darlington's more of a man than he seems. And he's thoroughly convinced of Cynthia's innocence. Here they are."

There was a stir in the crowd. Many women present rustled as they turned in their seats; some stood up and craned forward; people in the gallery leaned over, looking eagerly down; a loud murmur and a wide hiss of whispering emphasized the life in the court. The tall, loose-limbed figure of Esmé Darlington, looking to-day singularly dignified and almost impressive, pushed slowly forward, followed by the woman whose social fate was so soon to be decided.

Mrs. Clarke glanced round over the many faces without any defiance as she made her way with difficulty to a seat beside her solicitor. The lack of defiance in her expression

struck Dion forcibly. This woman did not seem to be mentally on the defensive, did not seem to be wishing to repel the glances, fierce with curiosity, which were levelled at her from all sides. Apparently she had no fear at all of bristling bayonets. Her haggard face was unsmiling, not cold, but intense with a sort of living calm which was surely not a mask. She looked at Mrs. Chetwinde and at Dion as she passed near to them, giving them no greeting except with her large eyes which obviously recognized them. In a moment she was sitting down between her solicitor and Esmé Darlington.

"It will quite break Guy Daventry up if she doesn't get the verdict," said Dion in an uneven voice to Mrs. Chetwinde.

"Mr. Daventry?" she said, with an odd little stress of emphasis on the name.

"Of course I should hate it too. Any man who feels a woman is innocent——"

He broke off. She said nothing, and went on eating her little sandwiches as if she rather disliked them.

"Mrs. Chetwinde, do tell me. I believe you've got an extraordinary flair—will she win?"

"My dear boy, now how can I know?"

Dion felt very young for a minute.

"I want to know what you expect."

Mrs. Chetwinde closed the small silver box with a soft snap.

"I fully expect her to win."

"Because she's innocent?"

"Oh no. That's no reason in a world like this, unfortunately."

"But, then, why?"

"Because Cynthia always does get what she wants, or needs. She has quite abnormal will-power, and will-power is *the* conqueror. If I'm to tell you the truth, I see only one reason for doubt, I don't say fear, as to the result."

"Can you tell me what it is?"

"Aristide Dumeny."

At this moment the Judge returned to the bench. An hour later he began to sum up.

He spoke very slowly and rather monotonously, and at first Dion thought that he was going to be "let down" by this almost cruelly level finale to a dramatic, sometimes even horrible, struggle between powerful opposing forces. But presently he began to come under a new fascination, the

fascination of a cool and very clear presentation of undressed facts. Led by the Judge, he reviewed again the complex life at Constantinople, he followed again Mrs. Clarke's many steps away from the beaten paths, he penetrated again through some of the winding ways into the shadows of the unwise life. And he began to wonder a little and a little to fear for the woman who was sitting so near to him waiting for the end. He could not tell whether the Judge believed her to be innocent or guilty, but he thought he could tell that the Judge considered her indiscreet, too heedless of those conventions on which social relations are based, too determined a follower after the flitting light of her own desires. Presently the position of Beadon Clarke in the Constantinople *ménage* was touched upon, and suddenly Dion found himself imagining how it would be to have as his wife a Mrs. Clarke. Suppose Rosamund were to develop the unconventional idiosyncrasies of a Cynthia Clarke? He realized at once that he was not a Beadon Clarke; he could never stand that sort of thing. He felt hot at the mere thought of his Rosamund making night expeditions in caïques alone with young men—such, for instance, as Hadi Bey; or listening alone at midnight in a garden pavilion isolated, shaded by trees, to the music made by a Dumeny.

Dumeny! The Judge pronounced his name.

"I come now to the respondent's relation with the second co-respondent, Aristide Dumeny of the French Embassy in Constantinople."

Dion leaned slightly forward and looked at Dumeny. Dumeny was sitting bolt upright, and now, as the Judge mentioned his name, he folded his arms, raised his long dark eyes, and gazed steadily at the bench. Did he know that he was the danger in the case? If he did he did not show any apprehension. His white face, typically French, with its rather long nose, slightly flattened temples, faintly cynical and ironic lips and small but obstinate chin, was almost sinister in its complete immobility.

"He's certainly a corrupt beast," Dion said to himself. "But as certainly he's an interesting, clever, knowledgeable beast."

Dumeny's very thick, glossy, and slightly undulating dark hair, growing closely round his low forehead, helped to make him almost romantically handsome, although his features were rather irregular. His white ears were abnormally small, Dion noticed.

The Judge went with cold minuteness into every detail of Dumeny's intimacy with Mrs. Clarke that had been revealed in the trial, and dwelt on the link of music which, it was said, had held them together.

" Music stimulates the passions, and may, in highly sensitive persons, generate impulses not easy to control, provided that the situation in which such persons find themselves, when roused and stirred, is propitious. It has been given in evidence that Monsieur Dumeny frequently played and sang to the respondent till late in the night in the pavilion which has been described to you. You have seen Monsieur Dumeny in the box, and can judge for yourselves whether he was a man likely to avail himself of any advantage his undoubted talents may have given him with a highly artistic and musical woman."

There was nothing striking in the words, but to Dion the Judge's voice seemed slightly changed as it uttered the last sentence. Surely a frigid severity had crept into it, surely it was coloured with a faint, but definite, contempt. Several of the jury stared narrowly at Aristide Dumeny, and the foreman, with a care and precision almost ostentatious, took a note.

The Judge continued his analysis of Mrs. Clarke's intimacy with Dumeny. He was scrupulously fair ; he gave full weight to the mutual attraction which may be born out of common intellectual tastes—an attraction possibly quite innocent, quite free from desire of anything but food for the brain, the subtler emotions, and the soul " if you like to call it so, gentlemen." But, somehow, he left upon the mind of Dion, and probably upon the minds of many others, an impression that he, the Judge, was doubtful as to the sheer intellectuality of Monsieur Dumeny, was not convinced that he had reached that condition of moral serenity and purification in which a rare woman can be happily regarded as a sort of disembodied spirit.

When the Judge at length finished with Dumeny and Dumeny's relations with Mrs. Clarke, Dion felt very anxious about the verdict. The Judge had not succeeded in making him believe that Mrs. Clarke was a guilty woman, but he feared that the jury had been made doubtful. It was evident to him that the Judge had a bad opinion of Dumeny, and had conveyed his opinion to the jury. Was the unwisdom of Mrs. Clarke to prove her undoing ? Esmé Darlington was pulling his ducal beard almost nervously. A faint hum went

through the densely-packed court. Mrs. Chetwinde moved and used her fan for a moment. Dion did not dare to look at Guy Daventry. He was realizing, with a sort of painful sharpness, how great a change a verdict against Mrs. Clarke must make in her life.

Her boy, perhaps, probably indeed, would be taken from her. She had only spoken to him casually about her boy, but he had felt that the casual reference did not mean that she had a careless heart. The woman whose hand had held his for a moment would be tenacious in love. He felt sure of that, and sure that she loved her naughty boy with a strong vitality.

When the Judge had finished his task and the jury retired to consider their verdict, it was past four o'clock.

"What do you think?" Dion said in a low voice to Mrs. Chetwinde.

"About the summing-up?"

"Yes."

"It has left things very much as I expected. Any danger there is lies in Monsieur Dumeny."

"Do you know him?"

"Oh yes. I stayed with Cynthia once in Constantinople. He took us about."

She made no further comment on Monsieur Dumeny.

"I wonder whether the jury will be away long?" Dion said, after a moment.

"Probably. I shan't be at all surprised if they can't agree. Then there will be another trial."

"How appalling!"

"Yes, it wouldn't be very nice for Cynthia."

"I can't help wishing——"

He paused, hesitating.

"Yes?" said Mrs. Chetwinde, looking about the court.

"I can't help wishing Mrs. Clarke hadn't been unconventional in quite such a public way."

A faint smile dawned and faded on Mrs. Chetwinde's lips and in her pale eyes.

"The public method's often the safest in the end," she murmured.

Then she nodded to Esmé Darlington, who presently got up and managed to make his way to them. He, too, thought the jury would probably disagree, and considered the summing-up rather unfavourable to Mrs. Clarke.

"People who live in the diplomatic world live in a whisper-

ing gallery," he said, bending down, speaking in an under-voice and lifting and lowering his eyebrows. "I told Cynthia so when she married. I ventured to give her the benefit of my—if I may say so—long and intimate knowledge of diplomatic life and diplomatists. I said to her, 'Remember you will *always* be under observation.' Ah, well—one can only hope the jury will take the right view. But how can we expect British shopkeepers, fruit brokers, cigar merchants, and so forth to understand a—really, one can only say—a wild nature like Cynthia's? It's a wild mind—I'd say this before her!—in an innocent body, just that."

He pulled almost distractedly at his beard with bony fingers, and repeated plaintively:

"A wild mind in an innocent body—h'm, ha!"

"If only Mr. Grundy can be brought to comprehension of such a phenomenon!" murmured Mrs. Chetwinde.

It was obvious to Dion that his two friends feared for the result.

The Judge had left the bench. An hour passed by, and the chime of a clock striking five dropped down coolly, almost frostily, to the hot and curious crowd. Mrs. Clarke sat very still. Esmé Darlington had returned to his place beside her, and she spoke to him now and then. Hadi Bey wiped his handsome rounded brown forehead with a coloured silk handkerchief; and Aristide Dumeny, with half-closed eyes, ironically examined the crowd, whispered to a member of his Embassy who had accompanied him into court, folded his arms and sat looking down. Beadon Clarke's face was rigid, and a fierce red, like the red of a flush of shame, was fixed on his cheeks. His mother had pulled a thick black veil with a pattern down over her face, and was fidgeting perpetually with a chain of small moonstones set in gold which hung from her throat to her waist. Daventry, blinking and twitching, examined documents, used his handkerchief, glanced at his watch, hitched his gown up on his shoulders, looked at Mrs. Clarke and looked away.

Uneasiness, like a monster, seemed crouching in the court as in a lair.

At a quarter-past five, the Judge returned to the bench. He had received a communication from the jury, who filed in, to say, through their foreman, that they could not agree upon a verdict. A parley took place between the foreman and the Judge, who made inquiry about their difficulties, answered two questions, and finally dismissed them to further

deliberations, urging them strongly to try to arrive at an unanimous conclusion.

"I am willing to stay here till nightfall," he said, in a loud and almost menacing voice, "if there is any chance of a verdict."

The jury, looking weary, harassed and very hot, once more disappeared, the Judge left the bench, and the murmuring crowd settled down to another period of waiting.

To Dion it seemed that a great tragedy was impending. Already Mrs. Clarke had received a blow. The fact that the jury had publicly announced their disagreement would be given out to all the world by the newspapers, and must surely go against Mrs. Clarke even if she got a verdict ultimately.

"Do you think there is any chance still?" he said to Mrs. Chetwinde.

"Oh yes. As I told you, Cynthia always manages to get what she wants."

"I shouldn't think she can ever have wanted anything so much as she wants the right verdict to-day."

"I don't know that," Mrs. Chetwinde replied, with a rather disconcerting dryness.

She was using her fan slowly and monotonously, as if, perhaps, she were trying to make her mind calm by the repetition of a physical act.

"I'm sorry the foreman said they couldn't agree," Dion said, almost in a whisper. "Even if the verdict is for Mrs. Clarke, I'm afraid that will go against her."

"If she wins she wins, and it's all right. Cynthia's not the sort of woman who cares much what the world thinks. The only thing that really matters is what the world does; and if she gets the verdict the world won't do anything—except laugh at Beadon Clarke."

A loud buzz of conversation rose from the court. Presently the light began to fade, and the buzz faded with it; then some lights were turned on, and there was a crescendo of voices. It was possible to see more clearly the multitude of faces, all of them hot, nearly all of them excited and expressive. A great many people were standing, packed closely together and looking obstinate in their determined curiosity. Most of them were either staring at, or were trying to stare at Mrs. Clarke, who was now talking to her solicitor. Esmé Darlington was eating a meat lozenge and frowning, evidently discomposed by the jury's dilemma. Lady Ermyntrude Clarke had lifted her veil and was whisper-

ing eagerly to her son, bending her head, and emphasizing her remarks with excited gestures which seemed to suggest the energy of one already uplifted by triumph. Beadon Clarke listened with the passivity of a man encompassed by melancholy, and sunk deep in the abyss of shame. Aristide Dumeny was reading a letter which he held with long-fingered, waxen-white hands very near to his narrow dark eyes. His close-growing thick hair looked more glossy now that there was artificial light in the court; from a distance its undulations were invisible, and it resembled a cap of some heavy and handsome material drawn carefully down over his head. Hadi Bey retained his vivid, alert and martial demeanour. He was twisting his moustaches with a muscular brown hand, not nervously, but with a careless and almost a lively air. Many women gazed at him as if hypnotized; they found the fez very alluring. It carried their thoughts to the East; it made them feel that the romance of the East was not very far from them. Some of them wished it very near, and thought of husbands in silk hats, bowlers, and flat caps of Harris tweed with the dawning of a dull distaste. The woman just behind Dion was talking busily to her neighbour. Dion heard her say:

"Some women always manage to have a good time. I wish I was one of them. Dick is a dear, but still——" She whispered for a minute or two; then out came her voice with, "There must be great chances for a woman in the diplomatic world. I knew a girl who married an attaché and went to Bucharest. You can have no idea what the Roumanians——" whisper, whisper, whisper.

That woman was envying Mrs. Clarke, it seemed, but surely not envying her innocence. Dion began to be conscious of faint breaths from the furnace of desire, and suddenly he saw the gaunt and sickly-smiling head of hypocrisy, like the flat and tremulously moving head of a serpent, lifted up above the court. Only a little way off Robin, now better, but still "not quite the thing," was lying in his cosy cot in the nursery of No. 5 Little Market Street, with Rosamund sitting beside him. The window to-day, for once, would probably be shut as a concession to Robin's indisposition. A lamp would be burning perhaps. In fancy, Dion saw Rosamund's head lit up by a gentle glow, her hair giving out little gleams of gold, as if fire were caught in its meshes. How was it that her head always suggested to him purity; and not only her purity but the purity of all sweet, sane and

gloriously vigorous women—those women who tread firmly, nobly, in the great central paths of life? He did not know, but he was certain that the head of no impure, of no lascivious woman could ever look like his Rosamund's. That nursery, holding little Robin and his mother in the lamplight, was near to this crowded court, but it was very far away too, as far as heaven is from hell. It would be good, presently, to go back to it.

Chime after chime dropped down frostily into the almost rancid heat of the court. Time was sending its warning that night was coming to London.

An epidemic of fidgeting and of coughing seized the crowd, which was evidently beginning to feel the stinging whip of an intense irritation.

"What on earth," said the voice of a man, expressing the thought which bound all these brains together, "what on earth can the jury be up to?"

Surely by now everything for and against Mrs. Clarke must have been discussed *ad nauseam*. Only the vainest of repetitions could be occupying the time of the jury. People began positively to hate those twelve uninteresting men, torn from their dull occupations to decide a woman's fate. Even Mrs. Chetwinde showed vexation.

"This is really becoming ridiculous," she murmured. "Even twelve fools should know when to give their folly a rest."

"I suppose there must be one or two holding out against all argument and persuasion. Don't you think so?" said Dion, almost morosely.

"I dare say. I know a great deal about individual fools, but very little about them in dozens. The heat is becoming unbearable."

She sighed deeply and moved in her seat, opening and shutting her fan.

"She must be enduring torment," muttered Dion.

"Yes; even Cynthia can hardly be proof against this intolerable delay."

Another dropping down of chimes: eight o'clock! A long murmur went through the crowd. Some one said: "They're coming at last."

Every one moved. Instinctively Dion leant forward to look at Mrs. Clarke. He felt very much excited and nervous, almost as if his own fate were about to be decided. As he looked he saw Mrs. Clarke draw herself up till she seemed

taller than usual. She had a pair of gloves in her lap, and she now began to pull one of these gloves on, slowly and carefully, as if she were thinking about what she was doing. The jury filed in looking feverish, irritable and battered. Three or four of them showed piteous and injured expressions. Two others had the peculiar look of obstinate men who have been giving free rein to their vice, indulging in an orgy of what they call will-power. Their faces were, at the same time, implacable and ridiculous, but they walked impressively. The Judge was sent for. Two or three minutes elapsed before he came in. During those minutes there was no coughing and scarcely any moving. The silence in the court was vital. During it, Dion stared hard at the jury and strove to read the verdict in their faces. Naturally he failed. No message came from them to him.

The Judge came back to the bench, looking weary and harsh.

"Do you find that the respondent has been guilty or not guilty of misconduct with the co-respondent, Hadi Bey?" said the clerk of the court.

"We find that the respondent has not been guilty of misconduct with Hadi Bey."

After a slight pause, speaking in a louder voice than before, the clerk of the court said:

"Do you find that the respondent has been guilty or not guilty of misconduct with the co-respondent, Aristide Dumeny?"

"We find that the respondent has not been guilty of misconduct with Aristide Dumeny."

Dion saw the Judge frown.

Slight applause broke out in the court, but it was fitful and uncertain and almost immediately died away.

Mrs. Chetwinde said in a low voice, almost as if to herself:

"Cynthia has got what she wants—again."

Then, after the formalities, the crowd was in movement; the weary and excited people, their curiosity satisfied at last, began to melt away; the young barristers hurried out, eagerly discussing the rights and wrongs of the case; and Mrs. Clarke's adherents made their way to her to offer her their congratulations.

Daventry was triumphant. He shook his client's hand, held it, shook it again, and could scarcely find words to express his excitement and delight. Even Esmé Darlington's usual careful serenity was for the moment obscured by an emotion

eminently human, as he spoke into Mrs. Clarke's ear the following words of a ripe wisdom :

" Cynthia, my dear, after this do take my advice and live as others live. In a conventional world conventionality is the line of least resistance. Don't turn to the East unless the whole congregation does it."

" I shall never forget your self-sacrifice in facing the crowd with me to-day, dear Esmé," was her answer. " I know how much it cost you."

" Oh, as to that, for an old friend—h'm, ha ! "

His voice failed in his beard. He drew forth a beautiful Indian handkerchief—a gift from his devoted friend the Viceroy of India—and passed it over a face which looked unusually old.

Mrs. Chetwinde said :

" I expected you to win, Cynthia. It was stupid of the jury to be so slow in arriving at the inevitable verdict. But stupid people are as lethargic as silly ones are swift. How shall we get to the carriage ? We can't go out by the public exit. I hear the crowd is quite enormous, and won't move. We must try a side door, if there is one."

Then Dion held Mrs. Clarke's hand, and looked down at her haggard but still self-possessed face. It astonished him to find that she preserved her earnestly observant expression.

" I'm very glad," was all he found to say.

" Thank you," she replied, in a voice perhaps slightly more husky than usual. " I mean to stay on in London for some time. I've got lots of things to settle "—she paused—" before I go back to Constantinople."

" But are you really going back ? "

" Of course—eventually."

Her voice, nearly drowned by the noise of people departing from the court, sounded to him implacable.

" You heard the hope of the Court that my husband and I would come together again ? Of course we never shall. But I'm sure I shall get hold of Jimmy. I know my husband won't keep him from me." She stared at his shoulders. " I want you to help me with Jimmy's physical education—I mean by getting him to that instructor you spoke of."

" To be sure—Jenkins," he said, marvelling at her.

" Jenkins—exactly. And I hope it will be possible for your wife and me to meet soon, now there's nothing against it owing to the verdict."

" Thank you."

"Do tell her, and see if we can arrange it."

Dumeny at this moment passed close to them with his friend on his way out of court. His eyes rested on Mrs. Clarke, and a faint smile went over his face as he slightly raised his hat.

"Good-bye," said Mrs. Clarke to Dion.

And she turned to Sir John Addington.

Dion made his way slowly out into the night, thinking of the unwise life and of the smile on the lips of Dumeny.

## CHAPTER VI

THAT summer saw, among other events of moment, the marriage of Beatrice and Daventry, the definite establishment of Robin as a power in his world, and the beginning of one of those noiseless contests which seem peculiar to women, and which are seldom, if ever, fully comprehended in all their bearings by men.

Beatrice, as she wished it, had a very quiet, indeed quite a hole-and-corner wedding in a Kensington church, of which nobody had ever heard till she was married in it, to the great surprise of its vicar. its verger, and the decent widow woman who swept its pews for a moderate wage. For their honeymoon she and Daventry disappeared to the Garden of France to make a leisurely tour through the Châteaux country.

Meanwhile Robin, according to his nurse, "was growing something wonderful, and improving with his looks like nothing I ever see before, and me with babies ever since I can remember anything as you may say, a dear!" His immediate circle of wondering admirers was becoming almost extensive, including, as it did, not only his mother and father, his nurse, and the four servants at No. 5 Little Market Street, but also Mrs. Leith senior, Bruce Evelin—now rather a lonely man—and Mr. Thrush of John's Court near the Edgware Road.

At this stage of his existence, Rosamund loved Robin reasonably but with a sort of still and holy concentration, which gradually impinged upon Dion like a quiet force which spreads subtly, affecting those in its neighbourhood. There was in it something mystical and, remembering her revelation

to him of the desire to enter the religious life which had formerly threatened to dominate her, Dion now fully realized the truth of a remark once made by Mrs. Chetwinde about his wife. She had called Rosamund "a radiant mystic."

Now changes were blossoming in Rosamund like new flowers coming up in a garden, and one of these flowers was a beautiful selfishness. So Dion called it to himself but never to others. It was a selfishness surely deliberate and purposeful—an unselfish selfishness, if such a thing can be. Can the ideal mother, Dion asked himself, be wholly without it? All that she is, perhaps, reacts upon the child of her bosom, the child who looks up to her as its Providence. And what she is must surely be at least partly conditioned by what she does and by all her way of life. The child is her great concern, and therefore she must guard sedulously all the gates by which possible danger to the child might strive to enter in. This was what Rosamund had evidently made up her mind to do, was beginning to do. Dion compared her with many of the women of London who have children and who, nevertheless, continue to lead haphazard, frivolous, utterly thoughtless lives, caring apparently little more for the moral welfare of their children than for the moral welfare of their Pekinese. Mrs. Clarke had a hatred of "things with wings growing out of their shoulders." Rosamund would probably never wish their son to have wings growing out of his shoulders, but if he had little wings on his sandals, like the Hermes, perhaps she would be very happy. With winged sandals he might take an occasional flight to the gods. Hermes, of course, was really a rascal, many-sided, and, like most many-sided people and gods, capable of insincerity and even of cunning; but the Hermes of Olympia, their Hermes, was the messenger purged, by Praxiteles, of every bit of dross—noble, manly, pure, serene. Little Robin bore at present no resemblance to the Hermes, or indeed—despite the nurse's statements—to anyone else except another baby; but already it was beginning mysteriously to be possible to foresee the great advance—long clothes to short clothes, short clothes to knickerbockers, knickerbockers to trousers. Robin would be a boy, a youth, a man, and what Rosamund was might make all the difference in that Trinity. The mystic who enters into religion dedicates her life to God. Rosamund dedicated hers to her boy. It was the same thing with a difference. And as the mystic is often a little selfish in shutting out cries of the world—cries sometimes for human aid which

can scarcely be referred from the fellow-creature to God—so Rosamund was a little selfish, guided by the unusual temperament which was housed within her. She shut out some of the cries that she might hear Robin's the better.

Robin's sudden attack of illness during Mrs. Clarke's ordeal had been overcome and now seemed almost forgotten. Rosamund had encountered the small fierce shock of it with an apparent calmness and self-possession which at the time had astonished Dion and roused his admiration. A baby often comes hardly into the world and slips out of it with the terrible ease of things fated to far-off destinies. During one night Robin had certainly been in danger. Perhaps that danger had taught Rosamund exactly how much her child meant to her. Dion did not know this; he suspected it because, since Robin's illness, he had become much more sharply aware of the depth of mother-love in Rosamund, of the hovering wings that guarded the nestling. That efficient guarding implies shutting out was presently to be brought home to him with a definiteness leading to embarrassment.

The little interruptions a baby brings into the lives of a married couple were setting in. Dion was sure that Rosamund never thought of them as interruptions. When Robin grew much older, when he was in trousers, and could play games, and appreciate his father's prowess and God-given capacities in the gymnasium, on the tennis lawn, over the ploughland among the partridges, Dion's turn would come. Meanwhile, did he actually love Robin? He thought he did. He was greatly interested in Robin, was surprised by his abrupt manifestations and almost hypnotized by his outbursts of wrath; when Robin assumed his individual look of mild inquiry, Dion was touched, and had a very tender feeling at his heart. No doubt all this meant love. But Dion fully realized that his feeling towards Robin did not compare with Rosamund's. It was less intense, less profound, less of the very roots of being. His love for Robin was a shadow compared with the substance of his love for Rosamund. How would Rosamund's two loves, for him and for Toby, compare? He began to wonder, even sometimes put to himself the questions, "Suppose Robin were to die, how would she take it? And how would she take it if I were to die?" And then, of course, his mind sometimes did foolish things, asked questions beginning with, "Would she rather——?" He remembered his talks with Rosamund on the Acropolis—talks never renewed—and compared the former life without little

Robin, with the present life pervaded gently, or vivaciously, or almost furiously by little Robin. Among the mountains and by the deep-hued seas of Greece he had foreseen and wondered about Robin. Now Robin was here; the great change was accomplished. Probably Rosamund and he, Dion, would never again be alone with their love. Other children, perhaps, would come. Even if they did not, Robin would pervade their lives, in long clothes, short skirts, knickerbockers, trousers. He might, of course, some day choose a profession which would carry him to some distant land: to an Indian jungle or a West African swamp. But by that time his parents would be middle-aged people. And how would their love be then? Dion knew that now, when Rosamund and he were still young, both less than thirty, he would give a hundred Robins, even if they were all his own Robins, to keep his one Rosamund. That was probably quite natural now, for Robin was really rather inexpressive even in the midst of his most unbridled demonstrations. When he was calm and blew bubbles he had charm; when he was red and furious he had a certain power; when he sneezed he had pathos; when he slept the serenity of him might be felt; but he would mean very much more presently. He would grow, and surely his father's love for him would grow. But could it ever grow to the height, the flowering height, of the husband's love for Rosamund? Dion already felt certain that it never could, that it was his destiny to be husband rather than parent, the eternal lover rather than the eternal father. Rosamund's destiny was perhaps to be the eternal mother. She had never been exactly a lover. Perhaps her remarkable and beautiful purity of disposition had held her back from being that. Force, energy, vitality, strong feelings, she had; but the peculiar something in which body seems mingled with soul, in which soul seems body and body soul, was apparently lacking in her. Dion had perhaps never, with full consciousness, missed that element in her till Robin made his appearance; but Robin, in his bubbling innocence, and almost absurd unconsciousness of himself and of others, did many things that were not unimportant. He even had the shocking impertinence to open his father's eyes, and to show him truths in a bright light—truths which, till now, had remained half-hidden in shadow; babyhood enlightened youth, the youth persisting hardily because it had never sown wild oats. Robin did not know that; he knew, in fact, scarcely anything except when he wanted nourishment and when he desired repose.

He also knew his mother, knew her mystically and knew her greedily, with knowledge which seemed of God, and with an awareness whose parent was perhaps a vital appetite. At other people he gazed and bubbled but with a certain infantile detachment, though his nurse, of course, declared that she had never known a baby to take such intelligent notice of all created things in its neighbourhood. "He knows," she asseverated, with the air of one versed in the mysteries, "He knows, does little master, who's who as well as anyone, and a deal better than some that prides themselves on this and that, a little upsy-daisy-dear!"

Mrs Leith senior paid him occasional visits, which Dion found just the least bit trying. Since Omar had been killed, Dion had felt more solicitous about his mother, who had definitely refused ever to have another dog. If he had been allowed to give her a dog he would have felt more easy about her, despite Beatrice's quiet statement of why Omar had meant so much. As he might not do that, he begged his mother to come very often to Little Market Street and to become intimate with Robin. But when he saw her with Robin he was generally embarrassed, although she was obviously enchanted with that gentleman, for whose benefit she was amazingly prodigal of nods and becks and wreathed smiles. It was a pity, he thought, that his mother was at moments so apparently elaborate. He felt her elaboration the more when it was contrasted with the transparent simplicity of Rosamund. Even Robin, he fancied, was at moments rather astonished by it, and perhaps pushed on towards a criticism at present beyond the range of his powers. But Mrs. Leith's complete self-possession, even when immersed in the intricacies of a baby-language totally unintelligible to her son, made it impossible to give her a hint to be a little less—well, like herself when at No. 5. So he resigned himself to a faint discomfort which he felt sure was shared by Rosamund, although neither of them ever spoke of it. But they never discussed his mother, and always assumed that she was ideal both as mother-in-law and grandmother. She was Robin's godmother and had given him delightful presents. Bruce Evelin and Daventry were his godfathers.

Bruce Evelin now lived alone in the large house in Great Cumberland Place. He made no complaint of his solitude, which indeed he might be said to have helped to bring about by his effective, though speechless, advocacy of Daventry's desire. But it was obvious to affectionate eyes that he

sometimes felt rather homeless, and that he was happy to be in the little Westminster home where such a tranquil domesticity reigned. Dion sometimes felt as if Bruce Evelin were watching over that home in a wise old man's way, rather as Rosamund watched over Robin, with a deep and still concentration. Bruce Evelin had, he confessed, "a great feeling" for Robin, whom he treated with quiet common sense as a responsible entity, bearing, with a matchless wisdom, that entity's occasional lapses from decorum. Once, for instance, Robin chose Bruce Evelin's arms unexpectedly as a suitable place to be sick in, without drawing down upon himself any greater condemnation than a quiet, "How lucky he selected a godfather as his receptacle!"

And Mr. Thrush of John's Court? One evening, when he returned home, Dion found that old phenomenon in the house paying his respects to Robin. He was quite neatly dressed, and wore beneath a comparatively clean collar a wisp of black tie that was highly respectable, though his top hat, deposited in the hall, was still as the terror that walketh in darkness. His poor old grey eyes were pathetic, and his long, battered old face was gently benign; but his nose, fiery and tremendous as ever, still made proclamation of his "failing." Dion knew that Mr. Thrush had already been two or three times to see Robin, and had wondered about it with some amusement. "Where will your cult for Mr. Thrush lead you?" he had laughingly said to Rosamund. And then he had forgotten "the phenomenon," as he sometimes called Mr. Thrush. But now, when he actually beheld Mr. Thrush in his house, seated on a chair in the nursery, with purple hands folded over a seedy, but carefully brushed, black coat, he genuinely marvelled.

Mr. Thrush rose up at his entrance, quite unself-conscious and self-possessed, and as Dion, concealing his surprise, greeted the visitor, Rosamund, who was showing Robin, remarked:

"Mr. Thrush has great ideas on hygiene, Dion. He quite agrees with us about not wrapping children in cotton-wool."

"Your conceptions are Doric, too, in fact?" said Dion to Thrush, in the slightly rough or bluff manner which he now sometimes assumed.

"I wouldn't go so far as to say exactly that, sir," said Mr. Thrush, speaking with a sort of gentleness which was almost refined. "But having been a chemist in a very good

way of business—just off Hanover Square—during the best years of my life, I have my views, foolish or perhaps the reverse, on the question of infants. My motto, so far as I have one, is, *Never cosset.*"

He turned towards Robin, who, from his mother's arms, sent him a look of mild inquiry, and reiterated, with plaintive emphasis, "*Never cosset!*"

"There, Dion!" said Rosamund, with a delicious air of genial appreciation which made Mr. Thrush gently glow.

"And I'll go further," pursued that authority, lifting a purple hand and moving his old head to give emphasis to his deliverance, "I'll go further even than that. Having retired from the pharmaceutical brotherhood I'll say this: If you can do it, avoid drugs. Chemists"— he leaned forward and emphatically lowered his voice almost to a whisper—"Chemists alone know what harm they do."

"By Jove, though, and do they?" said Dion heartily.

"Terrible, sir, terrible! Some people's insides that I know of—used to know of, perhaps I should say—must be made of iron to deal with all the medicines they put into 'em. Oh, keep your baby's inside free from all such abominations!" (He loomed gently over Robin, who continued to stare at him with an expression of placid interrogation.) "Keep it away from such things as the Sampson Syrup, Mother Maybrick's infant tablets, Price's purge for the nursery, Tinkler's tone-up for tiny tots, Ada Lane's pills for the poppets, and above and before all, from Professor Jeremiah T. Iplock's 'What baby wants' at two-and-sixpence the bottle, or in tabloid form for the growing child, two-and-eight the box. Keep his inside clear of all such, and you'll be thankful, and he'll bless you both on his bended knees when he comes to know his preservation."

"He'll never have them, Mr. Thrush," said Rosamund, with a sober voice and twinkling eyes. "Never."

"Bless you, ma'am, for those beautiful words. And now really I must be going."

"You'll find tea in the housekeeper's room, Mr. Thrush, as usual," said Rosamund.

"And very kind of you to have it there, I'm sure, ma'am!" the old gentleman gallantly replied as he made his wavering adieux.

At the door he turned round to face the nursery once more, lifted one hand in a manner almost apostolic, and uttered the final warning "*Never cosset!*" Then he evapor-

ated, not without a sort of mossy dignity, and might be heard tremblingly descending to the lower regions.

"Rose, since when have we a housekeeper's room?" asked Dion, touching Robin's puckers with a gentle forefinger.

"I can't call it the servants' hall to him, poor old man. And I like to give him tea. It may wean him from——" An expressive look closed the sentence.

That night, at last, Dion drew from her an explanation of her Thrush cult. On the evening when Mr. Thrush had rescued her in the fog, as they walked slowly to Great Cumberland Place, he had told her something of his history. Rosamund had a great art in drawing from people the story of their troubles when she cared to do so. Her genial and warm-hearted sympathy was an almost irresistible lure. Mr. Thrush's present fate had been brought about by a tragic circumstance, the death of his only child, a girl of twelve, who had been run over by an omnibus in Oxford Circus and killed on the spot. Left alone with a peevish, nagging wife who had never suited him, or, as he expressed it, "studied" him in any way, he had gone down the hill till he had landed near the bottom. All his love had been fastened on his child, and sorrow had not strengthened but had embittered him.

"But to me he seems a gentle old thing," Dion said, when Rosamund told him this.

"He's very bitter inside, poor old chap, but he looks upon us as friends. He's taken sorrow the wrong way. That's how it is. I'm trying to get him to look at things differently, and Robin's helping me."

"Already!" said Dion, smiling, yet touched by her serious face.

"Yes. He's an unconscious agent. Poor old Mr. Thrush has never learnt the lesson of our dear Greek tombs: Χαῖρε! He hasn't been able to say that simply and beautifully, leaving all in other hands. And so he's the poor old wreck we know. I want to get him out of it if I can. He came into my life on a night of destiny too."

But she explained nothing more. And she left Dion wondering just how she would receive a sorrow such as had overtaken Mr. Thrush. Would she be able to submit as those calm and simple figures on the tombs which she loved appeared to be submitting? Would she let what she loved pass away into the shades with a brave and noble, "Farewell"? Would she take the hand of Sorrow, that hand of steel and

ice, as one takes the hand of a friend—stern, terrible, unfathomed, never to be fathomed in this world, but a friend? He wondered, but, loving her with that love which never ceased to grow within him, he prayed that he might never know. She seemed born to shed happiness and to be happy, and indeed he could scarcely imagine her wretched.

It was after the explanation of Mr. Thrush's exact relation to Rosamund that the silent contest began in the waning summer, when London was rather arid, and even the Thames looked hot between its sluggish banks of mud.

After the trial of her divorce case was over, Mrs. Clarke had left London and gone into the country for a little while, to rest in a small house possessed by Esmé Darlington at Hook Green, a fashionable part of Surrey. At, and round about, Hook Green various well-known persons played occasionally at being rural; it suited Mrs. Clarke very well to stay for a time among them under Mr. Darlington's ample and eminently respectable wing. She hated being careful, but even she, admonished by Mr. Darlington, realized that immediately after emerging from the shadow of a great scandal she had better play propriety for a time. It really must be "playing," for, as had been proved at the trial, she was a thoroughly proper person who hadn't troubled to play hitherto. So she rested at Hook Green, till the season was over, with Miss Bainbridge, an old cousin of Esmé's; and Esmé "ran down" for Saturdays and Sundays, and "ran up" from Mondays to Saturdays, thus seeing something of the season and also doing his chivalrous devoir by "poor dear Cynthia who has had such a cruel time of it."

The season died, and Mr. Darlington then settled down for a while at Pinkney's Place, as his house was called, and persuaded Mrs. Clarke to lengthen her stay there till the end of August. He would invite a few of the people likely to "be of use" to her under the present circumstances, and by September things would be "dying down a little," with all the shooting parties of the autumn beginning, and memories of the past season growing a bit grey and mouldy. Then Mrs. Clarke could do what she liked "within reason, of course, and provided she gave Constantinople a wide berth." This she had not promised to do, but she seldom made promises.

Rosamund had expressed to Daventry her pleasure in the result of the trial, but in the rather definitely detached manner which had always marked her personal aloofness from the whole business of the deciding of Mrs. Clarke's

innocence or guilt. She had only spoken once again of the case to Dion, when he had come to tell her the verdict. Then she had said how glad she was, and what a relief it must be to Mrs. Clarke, especially after the hesitation of the jury. Dion had touched on Mrs. Clarke's great self-possession, and—Rosamund had begun to tell him how much better little Robin was. He had not repeated to Rosamund Mrs. Clarke's final words to him. There was no necessity to do that just then.

Mrs. Clarke stayed at Hook Green till the end of August without making any attempt to know Rosamund. By that time Dion had come to the conclusion that she had forgotten about the matter. Perhaps she had merely had a passing whim which had died. He was not sorry, indeed, he was almost actively glad, for he was quite sure Rosamund had no wish to make Mrs. Clarke's acquaintance. At the beginning of September, however, when he had just come back to work after a month in camp which had hardened him and made him as brown as a berry, he received the following note :

"CLARIDGE'S HOTEL,
*2 September*, 1897

"DEAR MR. LEITH,—What of that charming project of bringing about a meeting between your wife and me ? Esmé Darlington is always talking about her beauty and talent, and you know my love of the one and the other. Beauty is the consolation of the world ; talent the incentive to action stirring our latent vitality. In your marriage you are fortunate ; in mine I have been unfortunate. You were very kind to me when things were tiresome. I feel a desire to see your happiness. I'm here arranging matters with my solicitor, and expect to be here off and on for several months. Perhaps October will see you back in town, but if you happen to be in this dusty nothingness now, you might come and see me one day.—Yours with goodwill,

"CYNTHIA CLARKE

"P.S.—My husband and I are separated, of course, but I have my boy a good deal with me. He will be up with me to-morrow. I very much want to take him to that physical instructor you spoke of to me. I forget the name. Is it Hopkins ? "

As Dion read this note in the little house he felt the soft warm grip of Stamboul. Rosamund and Robin were staying

at Westgate till the end of September; he would go down there every week from Saturday till Monday. It was now a Monday evening. Four London days lay before him. He put away the letter and resolved to answer it on the morrow. This he did, explaining that his wife was by the sea and would not be back till the autumn. He added that the instructor's name was not Hopkins but Jenkins, and gave Mrs. Clarke the address of the gymnasium. At the end of his short note he expressed his intention of calling at Claridge's, but did not say when he would come. He thought he would not fix the day and the hour until he had been to Westgate. On a postcard Mrs. Clarke thanked him for Jenkins's address, and concluded with "Suggest your own day, or come and dine if you like. Perhaps, as you're alone, you'll prefer that.—C. C."

At Westgate Dion showed Rosamund Mrs. Clarke's letter. As she read it he watched her, but could gather nothing from her face. She was looking splendidly well and, he thought, peculiarly radiant. A surely perfect happiness gazed bravely out from her mother's eyes, changed in some mysterious way since the coming of Robin.

"Well?" he said, as she gave him back the letter.

"It's very kind of her. Esmé Darlington turns us all into swans, doesn't he? He's a good-natured enchanter. How thankful she must be that it's all right about her boy. Oh, here's Robin! Robino, salute your father! He's a hard-bitten military man, and some day—who knows?—he'll have to fight for his country. Dion, look at him! Now isn't he trying to salute?"

"And that he is, ma'am!" cried the ecstatic nurse. "He knows, a boy! It's trumpets, sir, and drums he's after already. He'll fight some day with the best of them. Won't he then, a marchy-warchy-umtums?"

And Robin made reply with active fists and feet and martial noises, assuming alternate expressions of severe decision almost worthy of a Field-Marshal, and helpless bewilderment that suggested a startled puppy. He was certainly growing in vigour and beginning to mean a good deal more than he had meant at first. Dion was more deeply interested in him now, and sometimes felt as if Robin returned the interest, was beginning to be able to assemble and concentrate his faculties at certain moments. Certainly Robin already played an active part in the lives of his parents. Dion realized that when, on the following Monday, he returned

to town without having settled anything with regard to Mrs. Clarke. Somehow Robin had always intervened when Dion had drawn near to the subject of the projected acquaintance between the woman who kept the door of her life and the woman who, innocently, followed the flitting light of desire. There were the evenings, of course, but somehow they were not propitious for a discussion of social values. Although Robin retired early, he was apt to pervade the conversation. And then Rosamund went away at intervals to have a look at him, and Dion filled up the time by smoking a cigar on the cliff edge. The clock struck ten-thirty—bed-time at Westgate—before one had at all realized how late it was getting; and it was out of the question to bother about things on the edge of sleep. That would have made for insomnia. The question of Mrs. Clarke could easily wait till the autumn, when Rosamund would be back in town. It was impossible for the two women to know each other when the one was at Claridge's and the other at Westgate. Things would arrange themselves naturally in the autumn. Dion never said to himself that Rosamund did not intend to know Mrs. Clarke, but he did say to himself that Mrs. Clarke intended to know Rosamund.

He wondered a little about that. Why should Mrs. Clarke be so apparently keen on making the acquaintance of Rosamund? Of course, Rosamund was delightful, and was known to be delightful. But Mrs. Clarke must know heaps of attractive people. It really was rather odd. He decidedly wished that Mrs. Clarke hadn't happened to get the idea into her head, for he didn't care to press Rosamund on the subject. The week passed, and another visit to Westgate, and he had not been to Claridge's. In the second week another note came to him from Mrs. Clarke.

"CLARIDGE'S, ETC.

"DEAR MR. LEITH,—I'm enchanted with Jenkins. He's a trouvaille. My boy goes every day to the 'gym,' as he calls it, and is getting on splendidly. We are both grateful to you, and hope to tell you so. Come whenever you feel inclined, but only then. I love complete liberty too well ever to wish to deprive another of it—even if I could. How wise of your wife to stay by the sea. I hope it's doing wonders for the baby who (mercifully) isn't wonderful.—Yours sincerely,

"CYNTHIA CLARKE"

After receiving this communication Dion felt that he simply must go to see Mrs. Clarke, and he called at the hotel and asked for her about five-thirty on the following afternoon. She was out, and he left his card, feeling rather relieved. Next morning he had a note regretting she had missed him, and asking him, "when" he came again, to let her know beforehand at what time he meant to arrive so that she might be in. He thanked her, and promised to do this, but he did not repeat his visit. By this time, quite unreasonably he supposed, he had begun to feel decidedly uncomfortable about the whole affair. Yet, when he considered it fully and fairly, he told himself that he was a fool to imagine that there could be anything in it which was not quite usual and natural. He had been sympathetic to Mrs. Clarke when she was passing through an unpleasant experience; he was Daventry's great friend; he was also a friend of Mrs. Chetwinde and of Esmé Darlington; naturally, therefore, Mrs. Clarke was inclined to number him among those who had "stuck to her" when she was being cruelly attacked. Where was the awkwardness in the situation? After denying to himself that there was any awkwardness he quite suddenly and quite clearly realized one evening that such denial was useless. There was awkwardness, and it arose simply from Rosamund's passive resistance to the faint pressure—he thought it amounted to that—applied by Mrs. Clarke. This it was which had given him, which gave him still, a sensation obscure, but definite, of contest.

Mrs. Clarke meant to know Rosamund, and Rosamund didn't mean to know Mrs. Clarke. Well, then, the obvious thing for him to do was to keep out of Mrs. Clarke's way. In such a matter Rosamund must do as she liked. He had no intention of attempting to force upon her anyone, however suitable as an acquaintance or even as a friend, whom she didn't want to know. He loved her far too well to do that. He decided not to mention Mrs. Clarke again to Rosamund when he went down to Westgate; but somehow or other her name came up, and her boy was mentioned, too.

"Is he still with his mother?" Rosamund asked.

"Yes. He's nearly eleven, I believe. She takes him to Jenkins for exercises. She's very fond of him, I think."

After a moment of silence Rosamund simply said, "Poor child!" and then spoke of something else, but in those two words, said as she had said them, Dion thought he heard a definite condemnation of Mrs. Clarke. He began to wonder

whether Rosamund, although she had not read a full, or, so far as he knew, any account of the case in the papers, had somehow come to know a good deal about the unwise life at Constantinople. Friends came to see her in London; she knew several people at Westgate; report of a *cause célèbre* floats in the air; he began to believe she knew.

At the end of September, just before Rosamund was to return to London for the autumn and winter, Mrs. Clarke wrote to Dion again.

"CLARIDGE'S,
28 *September*, 1897

"DEAR MR. LEITH,—I'm so sorry to bother you, but I wonder whether you can spare me a moment. It's about my boy. He seems to me to have strained himself with his exercises. Jenkins, as you probably know, has gone away for a fortnight's holiday, so I can't consult him. I feel a little anxious. You're an athlete, I know, and could set me right in a moment if I'm making a fuss about nothing. The strain seems to be in the right hip. Is that possible?—Yours sincerely,

"CYNTHIA CLARKE"

Dion didn't know how to refuse this appeal, so he fixed an hour, went to Claridge's, and had an interview with Mrs. Clarke and her son, Jimmy Clarke. When he went up to her sitting-room he felt rather uncomfortable. He was thinking of her invitation to dinner, and to call again, of his lack of response. She must certainly be thinking of them, too. But when he was with her his discomfort died away before her completely natural and oddly impersonal manner. Dinners, visits, seemed far away from her thoughts. She was apparently concentrated on her boy, and seemed to be thinking of him, not at all of Dion. Had Dion been a vain man he might have been vexed by her indifference; as he was not vain, he felt relieved, and so almost grateful to her. Jimmy, too, helped to make things go easily. The young rascal, a sturdy, good-looking boy, with dark eyes brimming over with mischief, took tremendously to Dion at first sight.

"I say," he remarked, "you must be jolly strong! May I?"

He felt Dion's biceps, and added, with a sudden profound gravity:

"Well, I'm blowed! Mater, he's almost as hard as Jenkins."

His mother gave Dion a swift considering look, and then at once began to consult him about Jimmy's hip. The visit ended with an application by Dion of Elliman's embrocation, for which one of the hotel page-boys was sent to the nearest chemist.

"I say, mind you come again, Mr. Leith!" vociferated Jimmy, when Dion was going. "You're better than doctors, you know."

Mrs. Clarke did not back up her son's frank invitation. She only thanked Dion quietly in her husky voice, and bade him good-bye with an "I know how busy you must be, and how difficult you must find it ever to pay a call. You've been very good to us." At the door she added, "I've never seen Jimmy take so much to anyone as to you." As Dion went down the stairs something in him was gently glowing. He was glad that young rascal had taken to him at sight. The fact gave him confidence when he thought of Robin and the future.

It occurred to him, as he turned into the Greville Club, that Mrs. Clarke had not once mentioned Rosamund during his visit.

## CHAPTER VII

WHEN Rosamund, Robin and the nurse came back to London on the last day of September, Beatrice and Daventry were settled in their home. They had taken a flat in De Lorne Gardens, Kensington, high up on the seventh floor of a big building, which overlooked from a distance the trees of Kensington Gardens. Their friends soon began to call on them, and one of the first to mount up in the lift to their "hill-top," as Daventry called their seventh floor, was Mrs. Clarke. A few nights after her call the Daventrys dined in Little Market Street, and Daventry, whose happiness had raised him not only to the seventh-floor flat, but also to the seventh heaven, mentioned that she had been, and that they were going to dine with her at Claridge's on the following night. He enlarged, almost with exuberance, upon her *savoir-vivre*, her knowledge and taste, and said Beattie was delighted with her.

Beatrice did not deny it. She was never exuberant, but she acknowledged that she had found Mrs. Clarke attractive and interesting.

"A lot of the clever ones are going to-morrow," said Daventry. He mentioned several, both women and men, among them a lady who was famed for her exclusiveness as well as for her brains.

Evidently Mrs. Chetwinde had been speaking by the book when she had said at the trial, "If she wins, she wins, and it's all right. If she gets the verdict, the world won't do anything, except laugh at Beadon Clarke." No serious impression had apparently been left upon society by the first disagreement of the jury. The "wild mind in the innocent body" had been accepted for what it was. And perhaps now, chastened by a sad experience, the wild mind was on the way to becoming tame. Dion wondered if it were so. After dinner he was undeceived by Daventry, who told him over their cigars that Mrs. Clarke was positively going back to live in Constantinople, and had already taken a flat there, "against every one's advice." Beadon Clarke had got himself transferred, and was to be sent to Madrid, so she wouldn't run against him; but nevertheless she was making a great mistake.

"However," Daventry concluded, "there's something fine about her persistence; and of course a guilty woman would never dare to go back, even after an acquittal."

"No," said Dion, thinking of the way his hand had been held in Mrs. Chetwinde's drawing-room. "I suppose not."

"I wonder when Rosamund will get to know her," said Daventry, with perhaps a slightly conscious carelessness.

"Never, perhaps," said Dion, with equal carelessness. "Often one lives for years in London without knowing, or even ever seeing, one's next-door neighbour."

"To be sure!" said Daventry. "One of London's many advantages, or disadvantages, as the case may be."

And he began to talk about Whistler's Nocturnes. Dion had never happened to tell Daventry about Jimmy Clarke's strained hip and his own application of Elliman's embrocation. He had told Rosamund, of course, and she had said that if Robin ever strained himself she should do exactly the same thing.

That night, when the Daventrys had gone, Dion asked Rosamund whether she thought Beattie was happy. She

hesitated for a moment, then she said with her usual directness:

"I'm not sure that she is, Dion. Guy is a dear, kind, good husband to her, but there's something homeless about Beattie somehow. She's living in that pretty little flat in De Lorne Gardens, and yet she seems to me a wanderer. But we must wait; she may find what she's looking for. I pray to God that she will."

She did not explain; he guessed what she meant. Had she, too, been a wanderer at first, and had she found what she had been looking for? While Rosamund was speaking he had been pitying Guy. When she had finished he wondered whether he had ever had cause to pity some one else—now and then. Despite the peaceful happiness of his married life there was a very faint coldness at, or near to, his heart. It came upon him like a breath of frost stealing up out of the darkness to one who, standing in a room lit and warmed by a glowing fire, opens a window and lets in for a moment a winter night. But he shut his window quickly, and he turned to look at the fire and to warm his hands at its glow.

Mrs. Clarke rapidly established a sort of intimacy with the Daventrys. As Daventry had helped to fight for her, and genuinely delighted in her faculties, this was very natural; for Beatrice, unlike Rosamund, was apt to take her colour gently from those with whom she lived, desiring to please them, not because she was vain and wished to be thought charming, but because she had an unusually sweet disposition and wished to be charming. She was sincere, and if asked a direct question always returned an answer that was true; but she sometimes fell in with an assumption from a soft desire to be kind. Daventry quite innocently assumed that she found Mrs. Clarke as delightful as he did. Perhaps she did; perhaps she did not. However it was, she gently accepted Mrs. Clarke as a friend.

Dion, of course, knew of this friendship; and so did Rosamund. She never made any comment upon it, and showed no interest in it. But her life that autumn was a full one. She had Robin; she had the house to look after, "my little house"; she had Dion in the evenings; she had quantities of friends and acquaintances; and she had her singing. She had now definitely given up singing professionally. Her very short career as an artist was closed. But she had begun to practise diligently again, and showed

by this assiduity that she loved music not for what she could gain by it, but for its own sake. Of her friends and acquaintances she saw much less than formerly. Many of them complained that they never could get a glimpse of her now, that she shut them out, that "not at home" had become a parrot-cry on the lips of her well-trained parlour-maid, that she cared for nobody now that she had a husband and a baby, that she was self-engrossed, etc. etc. But they could not be angry with her; for if they did happen to meet her, or if she did happen to be "at home" when they called, they always found her the genial, radiant, kind and friendly Rosamund of old; full, apparently, of all the former interest in them and their doings, eager to welcome and make the most of their jokes and good stories, sympathetic towards their troubles and sorrows. To Dion she once said in explanation of her withdrawal from the rather bustling life which keeping up with many friends and acquaintances implies:

"I think one sometimes has to make a choice between living deeply in the essentials and just paddling up to one's ankles in the non-essentials. I want to live deeply if I can, and I am very happy in quiet. I can hear only in peace the voices that mean most to me."

"I remember what you said to me once on the Acropolis," he answered.

"What was that?"

"You said, 'Oh, Dion, if you knew how something in me cares for freshness and for peace.'"

"You remember my very words!"

"Yes."

"Then you understand?"

"And besides," he said slowly, and as if with some hesitation, "you used to long for a very quiet life, for the religious life; didn't you?"

"Once, but it seems such ages ago."

"And yet Robin's not a year old yet."

She looked at him with a sudden, and almost intense, inquiry; he was smiling at her.

"Robino maestro di casa!" he added.

And they both laughed.

Towards the end of November one day Daventry said to Dion in the Greville Club:

"Beatrice is going to give a dinner somewhere, probably at the Carlton. She thought of the twenty-eighth. Are

Rosamund and you engaged that night? She wants you, of course."

"No. We don't go out much. Rose is an early rooster, as she calls it."

"Then the twenty-eighth would do capitally."

"Shall I tell Rose?"

"Yes, do. Beattie will write too, or tell Rosamund when she sees her."

"Whom are you going to have?"

"Oh, Mrs. Chetwinde for one, and—we must see whom we can get. We'll try to make it cheery and not too imbecile."

As Daventry was speaking, Dion felt certain that the dinner had an object, and he thought he knew what that object was. But he only said:

"It's certain to be jolly, and I always enjoy myself at the Carlton."

"Even with bores?" said Daventry, unable to refrain from pricking a bubble, although he guessed the reason why Dion had blown it.

"Anyhow, I'm sure you won't invite bores," said Dion, trying to preserve a casual air, and wishing, for the moment, that he and his friend were densely stupid instead of quite intelligent.

"Pray that Beattie and I may be guided in our choice," returned Daventry, going to pick up the "Saturday Review."

Rosamund said of course she would go on the twenty-eighth and help Beattie with her dinner. She had accepted before she asked who were the invited guests. Beattie, who was evidently quite guileless in the matter, told her at once that Mrs. Clarke was among them. Rosamund said nothing, and appeared to be looking forward to the twenty-eighth. She even got a new gown for it, and Dion began to feel that he had made a mistake in supposing that Rosamund had long ago decided not to know Mrs. Clarke. He was very glad, for he had often felt uncomfortable about Mrs. Clarke, who, he supposed, must have believed that his wife did not wish to meet her, as her reiterated desire to make Rosamund's acquaintance had met with no response. She had, he thought, shown the tact of a lady and of a thorough woman of the world in not pressing the point, and in never seeking to continue her acquaintance, or dawning friendship, with him since his wife had come back to town. He felt a strong desire now to be pleasant and cordial to her, and to show her how charming and sympathetic his Rosamund was. He looked forward

to this dinner as he seldom looked forward to any social festivity.

On the twenty-sixth of November Robin had a cold! On the twenty-seventh it was worse, and he developed a little hard cough which was rather pathetic, and which seemed to surprise and interest him a good deal. Rosamund was full of solicitude. On the night of the twenty-seventh she said she would sit up with Robin. The nurse protested, but Rosamund was smilingly firm.

"I want you to have a good night, Nurse," she said. "You're too devoted and take too much out of yourself. And, besides, I shouldn't sleep. I should be straining my ears all the time to hear whether my boy was coughing or not."

Nurse had to give in, of course. But Dion was dismayed when he heard of the project.

"You'll be worn out!" he exclaimed.

"No, I shan't. But even if I were it wouldn't matter."

"But I want you to look your radiant self for Beattie's dinner."

"Oh—the dinner!"

It seemed she had forgotten it.

"Robin comes first," she said firmly, after a moment of silence.

And she sat up that night in an arm-chair by the nursery fire, ministering at intervals to the child, who seemed impressed and heartened in his coughings by his mother's presence.

On the following day she was rather tired, the cough was not abated, and when Dion came back from business he learnt that she had telegraphed to Beattie to give up the dinner. He was very much disappointed. But she did really look tired; Robin's cough was audible in the quiet house; the telegram had gone, and of course there was nothing more to be done. Dion did not even express his disappointment; but he begged Rosamund to go very early to bed, and offered to sleep in a separate room if his return late was likely to disturb her. She agreed that, perhaps, that would be best. So, at about eleven-thirty that night, Dion made his way to their spare room, walking tentatively lest a board should creak and awaken Rosamund.

Everybody had missed her and had made inquiries about her, except Mrs. Clarke and Daventry. The latter had not mentioned her in Dion's hearing. But he was very busy with his guests. Mrs. Clarke had apparently not known that

Rosamund had been expected at the dinner, for when Dion, who had sat next her, had said something about the unfortunate reason for Rosamund's absence, Mrs. Clarke had seemed sincerely surprised.

"But I thought your wife had quite given up going out since her child was born?" she had said.

"Oh no. She goes out sometimes."

"I had no idea she did. But now I shall begin to be disappointed and to feel I've missed something. You shouldn't have told me."

It was quite gravely and naturally said. As he went into the spare room, Dion remembered the exact tone of Mrs. Clarke's husky voice in speaking it, the exact expression in her eyes. They were strange eyes, he thought, unlike any other eyes he had seen. In them there was often a look that seemed both intent and remote. Their gaze was very direct but it was not piercing. There was melancholy in the eyes but there was no demand for sympathy. When Dion thought of the expression in Rosamund's eyes he realized how far from happiness, and even from serenity, Mrs. Clarke must be, and he could not help pitying her. Yet she never posed as *une femme incomprise*, or indeed as anything. She was absolutely simple and natural. He had enjoyed talking to her. Despite her gravity she was, he thought, excellent company, a really interesting woman and strongly individual. She seemed totally devoid of the little tiresomenesses belonging to many women—tiresomenesses which spring out of vanity and affectation, the desire of possession, the uneasy wish to "cut out" publicly other women. Mrs. Clarke would surely never "manage" a man. If she held a man it would be with the listless and yet imperative grip of Stamboul. The man might go if he would, but—would he want to go?

In thinking of Mrs. Clarke, Dion of course always considered her with the detached spectator's mind. No woman on earth was of real importance to him except Rosamund. His mother he did not consciously count among women. She was to him just the exceptional being, the unique and homely manifestation a devoted mother is to the son who loves her without thinking about it; not numbered among women or even among mothers. She stood to him for protective love unquestioning, for interest in him and all his doings unwavering, for faith in his inner worth undying, for the Eternities without beginning or ending; but probably he did not know it. Of Rosamund, what she was, what she meant in his life

he was intensely, even, secretly, almost savagely conscious. In Mrs. Clarke he was more interested than he happened to be in any of the women who dwelt in the great world of those whom he did not love and never could love.

Had the dinner-party he had just been to been arranged by Daventry in order that Rosamund and Mrs. Clarke might meet in a perfectly natural way? If so, it must have been Daventry's idea and not Mrs. Clarke's. Dion had a feeling that Daventry had been vexed by Rosamund's defection. He knew his friend very well. It was not quite natural that Daventry had not mentioned Rosamund. But why should Daventry strongly wish Mrs. Clarke and Rosamund to meet if Mrs. Clarke had not indicated a desire to know Rosamund? Daventry was an enthusiastic adherent of Mrs. Clarke's. He had, Dion knew, a chivalrous feeling for her. Having helped to win her case, any slight put upon her would be warmly resented by him.

Had Rosamund put upon her a slight? Had she deliberately avoided the dinner?

Dion was on the point of getting into the spare-room bed when he asked himself the question. As he pulled back the clothes he heard a dry little sound. It was Robin's cough. He stole to the door and opened it. As he did so he saw the tail of Rosamund's dressing-gown disappearing over the threshold of the nursery. The nursery door shut softly behind her, and Dion got into bed feeling heartily ashamed of his suspicion. How low it was to search for hidden motives in such a woman as Rosamund. He resolved never to do that again. He lay in bed listening, but he did not hear Robin's cough again, and he wondered if the child was already old enough to be what nurses call "artful," whether he had made use of his little affliction to get hold of his providence in the night.

What a mystery was the relation of mother and little child! He lay for a long while musing about it. Why hadn't he followed Rosamund over the threshold of the nursery just now? The mystery had held him back.

Was it greater than the mystery of the relation of man to woman in a love such as his for Rosamund? He considered it, but he was certain that he could not fathom it. No man, he felt sure, knew or ever could know how a mother like Rosamund, that is an intensely maternal mother, regarded her child when he was little and dependent upon her; how she loved him, what he meant to her. And no doubt the

gift of the mother to the child was subtly reciprocated by the child. But just how ?

Dion could not remember at all what he had felt, or how he had regarded his mother when he was nine months old. Presently he recalled Hermes and the child in that remote and hushed room hidden away in the green wilds of Elis ; he even saw them before him—saw the wonderfully serene and contemplative expression on the beautiful face of the Hermes, saw the child's stretched-out arm.

Elis ! He had been wonderfully happy there, far away in the smiling wilderness. Would he ever be there again ? And, if fate did indeed lead his steps thither, would he again be wonderfully happy ? Of one thing he was certain ; that he would never see Elis, would never see Hermes and the child again, unless Rosamund was with him. She had made the green wilderness to blossom as the rose. She only could make his life to blossom. He depended upon her terribly—terribly. Always that love of his was growing. People, especially women, often said that the love of a man was quickly satisfied, more quickly than a woman's, that the masculine satisfaction was soon followed by satiety. Love such as that was only an appetite, a species of lust. Such a woman as Rosamund could not awaken mere lust. For her a man might have desire, but only the desire that every great love of a man for a woman encloses. And how utterly different that was from physical lust !

He thought of the maidens upholding the porch of the Erechtheion. His Rosamund descended from them, was as pure, as serene in her goodness, as beautiful as they were.

In thinking of the beloved maidens he did not think of them as marble.

Before he went to sleep Dion had realized that, since Rosamund was awake, the reason for his coming to the spare room did not exist. Nevertheless he did not go to their bedroom that night. Robin's little dry cough still sounded in his ears. To-night was Robin's kingdom.

In a day or two Robin was better, in a week he was perfectly well. If he had not chanced to catch cold, would Rosamund have worn that new evening-gown at the Carlton dinner ?

On that question Dion had a discussion with Daventry which was disagreeable to him. One day Daventry, who had evidently been, in silence, debating whether to speak or not, said to him :

"Oh, Dion, d'you mind if I use a friend's privilege and say something I very much want to say, but which you mayn't be so keen to hear?"

"No, of course not. We can say anything to each other."

"Can we? I'm not sure of that—now."

"What d'you mean?"

"Oh, well—anyhow, this time I'll venture. Why did Rosamund throw us over the other night at almost the last moment?"

"Because Robin was ill."

"He's quite well now."

"Why not? It's ten days ago."

"He can't have been so very ill."

"He was ill enough to make Rosamund very anxious. She was up with him the whole night before your dinner; and not only that, she was up again on the night of the dinner, though she was very tired."

"Well, coming to our dinner wouldn't have prevented that—only eight till ten-thirty."

"I don't think, Guy, you at all understand Rosamund's feeling for Robin," said Dion, with a sort of dry steadiness.

"Probably not, being a man."

"Perhaps a father can understand better."

"Better? It seems to me one either does understand a thing or one doesn't understand it."

There was a not very attractive silence which Daventry broke by saying:

"Then you think if Beattie and I give another dinner at the Carlton—a piece of reckless extravagance, but we are mad on entertaining!—Robin won't be ill again?"

"Another dinner? You'll be ruined."

"I've got several more briefs. Would Robin be ill?"

"How the deuce can anyone know?"

"I'll hazard a guess. He would be ill."

Dion reddened. There was sudden heat not only in his cheeks but also about his heart.

"I didn't know you were capable of talking such pernicious rubbish!" he said.

"Let's prove whether it's rubbish or not. Beattie will send Rosamund another dinner invitation to-morrow, and then we'll wait and see what happens to Robin's health."

"Guy, I don't want to have a quarrel with you."

"A quarrel? What about?"

"If you imply that Rosamund is insincere, is capable of

acting a part, we shall quarrel. Robin was really ill. Rosamund fully meant to go to your dinner. She bought a new dress expressly for it."

"Forgive me, old Dion, and please don't think I was attacking Rosamund. No. But I think sometimes the very sweetest and best women do have their little bit of insincerity. To women very often the motive seems of more importance than the action springing from it. I had an idea that perhaps Rosamund was anxious not to hurt some one's feelings."

"Whose?"

After a slight hesitation Daventry said:

"Mrs. Clarke's."

"Did Mrs. Clarke know that Rosamund accepted to go to your dinner?" asked Dion abruptly, and with a forcible directness that put the not unastute Daventry immediately on his guard.

"What on earth has that to do with it?"

"Everything, I should think. Did she?"

"No," said Daventry.

"Then how could——?" Dion began. But he broke off, and added more quietly:

"Why are you anxious that Rosamund should know Mrs. Clarke?"

"Well, didn't Mrs. Clarke ages ago express a wish to know Rosamund if the case went in her favour?"

"Oh, I—yes, I fancy she did. But she probably meant nothing by it, and has forgotten it."

"I doubt that. A woman who has gone through Mrs. Clarke's ordeal is generally hypersensitive afterwards."

"But she's come out splendidly. Everybody believes in her. She's got her child. What more can she want?"

"As she's such a great friend of ours I think it must seem very odd to her not knowing Rosamund, especially as she's good friends with you. D'you mind if we ask Rosamund to meet her again?"

"You've done it once. I should leave things alone. Mind, Rosamund has never told me she doesn't want to know Mrs. Clarke."

"That may be another example of her goodness of heart," said Daventry. "Rosamund seldom or never speaks against people. I'll tell you the simple truth, Dion. As I helped to defend Mrs. Clarke, and as we won and she was proved to be an innocent woman, and as I believe in her and admire her

very much, I'm sensitive for her. Perhaps it's very absurd."

"I think it's very chivalrous."

"Oh—rot! But there it is. And so I hate to see a relation of my own—I count Rosamund as a relation now—standing out against her."

"There's no reason to think she's doing that."

An expression that seemed to be of pity flitted over Daventry's intelligent face, and he slightly raised his eyebrows.

"Anyhow, we won't bother you with another dinner invitation," he said.

And so the conversation ended.

It left with Dion an impression which was not pleasant, and he could not help wondering whether, during the conversation, his friend had told him a direct and deliberate lie.

No more dinners were given by Beattie and Daventry at the Carlton. Robin's health continued to be excellent. Mrs. Clarke was never mentioned at 5 Little Market Street, and she gave to the Leiths no sign of life, though Dion knew that she was still in London and was going to stay on there until the spring. He did not meet her, although she knew many of those whom he knew. This was partly due, perhaps, to chance; but it was also partly due to deliberate action by Dion. He avoided going to places where he thought he might meet her: to Esmé Darlington's, to Mrs. Chetwinde's, to one or two other houses which she frequented; he even gave up visiting Jenkins's gymnasium because he knew she continued to go there regularly with Jimmy Clarke, whom, since the divorce case, with his father's consent, she had taken away from school and given to the care of a tutor. All this was easy enough, and required but little management on account of Rosamund's love of home and his love of what she loved. Since Robin's coming she had begun to show more and more plainly her root-indifference to the outside pleasures and attractions of the world, was becoming, Dion thought, week by week, more cloistral, was giving the rein, perhaps, to secret impulses which marriage had interfered with for a time, but which were now reviving within her. Robin was a genuine reason, but perhaps also at moments an excuse. Was there not sometimes in the quiet little house, quiet unless disturbed by babyhood's occasional outbursts, a strange new atmosphere, delicate and subdued, which hinted at silent walks, at twilight dreamings, at slowly pacing feet,

bowed heads and wide-eyed contemplation? Or was all this a fancy of Dion's, bred in him by Rosamund's revelation of an old and haunting desire? He did not know; but he did know that sometimes, when he heard her warm voice singing at a little distance from him within their house, he thought of a nun's voice, in some dim and remote chapel with stained-glass windows, singing an evening hymn in the service of Benediction.

In the midst of many friends, in the midst of the enormous City, Rosamund effected, or began to effect, a curiously intent withdrawal, and Dion, as it were, accompanied her; or perhaps it were truer to say, followed after her. He loved quiet evenings in his home, and the love of them grew steadily upon him. To the occasional protests of his friends he laughingly replied:

"The fact is we're both very happy at home. We're an unfashionable couple."

Bruce Evelin, Esmé Darlington and a few others, including, of course, Dion's mother and the Daventrys, they sometimes asked to come to them. Their little dinners were homely and delightful; but Mr. Darlington often regretted plaintively their "really, if I may say so, almost too definite domesticity." He even said to certain intimates:

"I know the next thing we shall hear of will be that the Leiths have decided to bury themselves in the country. And Dion Leith will wreck his nerves by daily journeys to town in some horrid business train."

At the beginning of January, however, there came an invitation which they decided to accept. It was to an evening party at Mrs. Chetwinde's, and she begged Rosamund to be nice to her and to sing at it.

"Since you've given up singing professionally one never hears you at all," she wrote. "I'm not going to tell the usual lie and say I'm only having a few people. On the contrary, I'm asking as many as my house will hold. It's on January the fifteenth."

It happened that the invitation arrived in Little Market Street by the last post, and that, earlier in the day, Daventry had met Dion in the Club and had casually told him that Mrs. Clarke was spending the whole of January in Paris, to get some things for the flat in Constantinople which she intended to occupy in the late spring. Rosamund showed Dion Mrs. Chetwinde's note.

"Let's go," he said at once.

"Shall we? Do you like these crowds? She says 'as many as my house will hold.'"

"All the better. There'll be all the more to enjoy the result of your practising. Do say yes."

His manner was urgent. Mrs. Clarke would be in Paris. This party was certainly no ingenuity of Daventry's.

"We mustn't begin to live like a monk and a nun," he exclaimed. "We're too young and enjoy life too much for that."

"Do monks and nuns live together? Since when?" said Rosamund, laughing at him.

"Poor wretches! If only they did, how much——!"

"Hush!" she said, with a smiling pretence of thinking of being shocked presently.

She went to the writing-table.

"Very well, then, we'll go if you want to."

"Don't you?" he asked, following her.

She had sat down and taken up a pen. Now she looked up at him with her steady eyes.

"I'm sure I shall enjoy it when I'm there," she answered. "I generally enjoy things. You know that. You've seen me among people so often."

"Yes. One would think you revelled in society if one only knew you in that phase."

"Well, I don't *really* care for it one bit. I can't, because I never miss it if I don't have it."

"I believe you *really* care for very few things and for very few people," he said.

"Perhaps that's true about people."

"How many people, I wonder?"

"I don't think one always knows whom one cares for until something happens."

"Something?"

"Until one's threatened with loss, or until one actually does lose somebody one loves. I"—she hesitated, stretched out her hand, and drew some notepaper out of a green case which stood on the table—"I had absolutely no idea what I felt for my mother until she died. She died very suddenly."

Tears rushed to her eyes and her whole face suddenly reddened.

"Then I knew!" she said, in a broken voice.

Dion had never before seen her look as she was looking now.

For a moment he felt almost as if he were regarding a stranger. There was a sort of heat of anger in the face, which

looked rebellious in its emotion ; and he believed it was the rebellion in her face which made him realize how intensely she had been able to love her mother.

"Now I must write to Mrs. Chetwinde," she said, suddenly bending over the notepaper, "and tell her we'll come, and I'll sing."

"Yes."

He stood for a moment watching the moving pen. Then he bent down and just touched her shoulder with a great gentleness.

"If you knew what I would do to keep every breath of sorrow out of your life!" he said, in a low voice.

Without looking up she touched his hand.

"I know you would. You could never bring sorrow into my life."

From that day Dion realized what intensity of feeling lay beneath Rosamund's serene and often actively joyous demeanour. Perhaps she cared for very few people, but for those few she cared with a force surely almost abnormal. Her mother had now been dead for many years; never before had Rosamund spoken of her death to him. He understood the reason of that silence now, and from that day the desire to keep all sorrow from her became almost a passion in him. He even felt that its approach to her, that its cold touch resting upon her, would be a hateful and almost unnatural outrage. Yet he saw all around him people closely companioned by sorrow and did not think that strange. Sorrow even approached very near to Rosamund and to him in that very month of January, for Beatrice had a miscarriage and lost her baby. She said very little about it, but Dion believed that she was really stricken to the heart. He was very fond of Beatrice, he almost loved her; yet her sorrow was only a shadow passing by him, not a substance pressing upon him. And that fact, which he realized, made him know how little even imagination and quiet affection can help men to feel the pains of others. The heart knoweth only its own bitterness and the bitterness of those whom it deeply and passionately loves.

## CHAPTER VIII

ON January the fifteenth Rosamund put on the gown which had been bought for the Carlton dinner but not worn at it.

Although she had not really wanted to go to Mrs. Chetwinde's party she looked radiantly buoyant, and like one almost shining with expectation, when she was ready to start for Lowndes Square.

"You ought to go out every night," Dion said, as he put her cloak over her shoulders.

"Why?"

"To enjoy and give enjoyment. Merely to look at you would make the dullest set of people in London wake up and scintillate. Don't tell me you're not looking forward to it, because I couldn't believe you."

"Now the war-paint is on I confess to feeling almost eager for the fray. How nicely you button it. You aren't clumsy."

"How could I be clumsy in doing something for you? Where's your music?"

"In my head. Jennie will meet us there."

Jennie was Rosamund's accompanist, a clever Irish girl who often came to Little Market Street to go through things with Rosamund.

"It will be rather delightful singing to people again," she added in a joyous voice as they got into the hired carriage. "I hope I've really improved."

"How you love a thing for itself!" he said, as they drove off.

"I think that's the only way to love."

"Of course it is. You know the only way to everything beautiful and sane. What I have learnt from you!"

"Dion," she said, in the darkness, "I think you are rather a dangerous companion for me."

"How can I be?"

"I'm not at all a piece of perfection. Take care you don't teach me to think I am."

"But you're the least conceited——"

"Hush, you encourager of egoism!" she interrupted seriously.

"I'm afraid you'll find a good many more at Mrs. Chetwinde's."

Dion thought he had been a true prophet half an hour later when, from a little distance, he watched and listened while Rosamund was singing her first song. Seeing her thus in the midst of a crowd he awakened to the fact that Robin had changed her very much. She still looked splendidly young, but she no longer looked like a girl. The married woman and the mother were there quite definitely. Even he fancied that he heard them in her voice, which had gained in some way, perhaps in roundness, in mellowness. This might be the result of study; he was inclined to believe it the result of motherhood. She was wearing ear-rings—tiny, not long drooping things; they were green, small emeralds; and he remembered how he had loved her better when he saw her wearing ear-rings for the first time in Mr. Darlington's drawing-room. How definite she was in a crowd. Crowds effaced ordinary people, but when Rosamund was surrounded she always seemed to be beautifully emphasized, to be made more perfectly herself. She did not take, she gave, and in giving showed how much she had.

She was giving now as she sang, "Caro mio ben."

Towards the end of the song, when Dion was deeply in it and in her who sang it, he was disturbed by a woman's whisper coming from close behind him. He did not catch the beginning of what was communicated, but he did catch the end. It was this: "Over there, the famous Mrs. Clarke."

But Mrs. Clarke was in Paris. Daventry had told him so. Dion looked quickly about the large and crowded room, but could not see Mrs. Clarke. Then he glanced behind him to see the whisperer, and beheld a hard-faced, middle-aged and very well-known woman—one of those women who, by dint of perpetually "going about," become at length something less than human. He was quite sure Mrs. Brackenhurst would not make a mistake about anything which happened at a party. She might fail to recognize her husband, if she met him about her house, because he was so seldom there; she would not fail to recognize the heroine of a resounding divorce case. Mrs. Clarke must certainly have returned from Paris and be somewhere in that room, listening to Rosamund and probably watching her. Dion scarcely knew whether this fact made him sorry or glad. He did know, however, that it oddly excited him.

When "Caro mio ben" was ended people began to move. Rosamund was surrounded and congratulated, and Dion saw

Esmé Darlington bending to her, half paternally, half gallantly, and speaking to her emphatically. Mrs. Chetwinde drifted up to her ; and three or four young men hovered near to her, evidently desirous of putting in a word. The success of her leaped to the eye. Dion saw it and glowed. But the excitement in him persisted, and he began to move towards the far side of the great room in search of Mrs. Clarke. If she had just come in she would probably be near the door by which the pathetic Echo stood on her pedestal of marble, withdrawn in her punishment, in her abasement beautiful and wistful. How different was Rosamund from Echo! Dion looked across at her joyous and radiant animation, as she smiled and talked almost with the eagerness and vitality of a child ; and he had the thought, " How goodness preserves ! " Women throng the secret rooms of the vanity specialists, put their trust in pomades, in pigments, in tinctures, in dyes ; and the weariness and the sin become lustrous, perhaps, but never are hidden or even obscured. His Rosamund trusted in a wholesome life, with air blowing through it, with sound sleep as its anodyne, with purity on guard at its door ; and radiance and youth sparkled up in her like fountain spray in the sunshine. And the wholesomeness of her was a lure to the many even in a drawing-room of London. He saw powdered women, women with darkened eyebrows, and touched-up lips, and hair that had forgotten long ago what was its natural colour, looking at her, and he fancied there was a dull wonder in their eyes. Perhaps they were thinking : " Yes, that's the recipe—being gay in goodness ! " And perhaps some of them were thinking, too : " We've lost the power to follow that recipe, if we ever had it." Poor women ! With a sort of exultation he pitied them and their husbands. A chord was sounded on the piano. He stood still. The loud buzz of conversation died down. Was Rosamund going to sing again so soon ? Perhaps some one had begged for something specially beloved. Jennie was playing a soft prelude as a gentle warning to a few of those who seem ever to find silence a physical difficulty. She stopped, and began to play something Dion did not know, something very modern in its strange atmospheric delicacy, which nevertheless instantly transported him to Greece. He was there, even before Rosamund began to sing in a voice that was hushed, in a far-off voice, not antique, but the voice of modernity, prompted by a mind looking away from what is near to what is afar and is deeply desired.

'A crescent sail upon the sea,
So calm and fair and ripple-free
You wonder storms can ever be;

A shore with deep indented bays,
And o'er the gleaming water-ways
A glimpse of Islands in the haze;

A face bronzed dark to red and gold,
With mountain eyes that seem to hold
The freshness of the world of old;

A shepherd's crook, a coat of fleece,
A grazing flock—the sense of peace,
The long sweet silence—this is Greece."

The accompaniment continued for a moment alone, whispering remoteness. Then, like a voice far off in a blue distance, there came again from Rosamund, more softly and with less pressure:

"——The sense of peace,
The long sweet silence—this is Greece!
This is Greece!"

It was just then that Dion saw Mrs. Clarke. She had, perhaps, been sitting down; or, possibly, some one had been standing in front of her and had hidden her from him; for she was not far off, and he wondered sharply why he had not seen her till now, why, till now, she had refrained from snatching him away from his land of the early morning. There was to him at this moment something actually cruel and painful in her instant suggestion of Stamboul. Yet she was not looking at him, but was directing upon Rosamund her characteristic gaze of consideration, in which there was a peculiar grave thoroughness. A handsome, fair young man, with a very red weak mouth, stood close to her. Echo was just beyond. Without speaking, Mrs. Clarke continued looking at Rosamund intently, when the music evaporated, and Greece faded away into the shining of that distance which hides our dreams. And Dion noted again, with a faint creeping of wonder and of doubt, the strange haggardness of her face, which, nevertheless, he had come to think almost beautiful.

The fair young man spoke to her, bending and looking at her eagerly. She turned her head slowly, and as if reluctantly towards him, and was evidently listening to what he said, listening with that apparent intentness which was characteristic of her. She was dressed in black and violet, and wore a

large knot of violets in her corsage. Round her throat was clasped an antique necklace of dull, unshining gold, and dim purple stones, which looked beautiful, but almost weary with age. Perhaps they had lain for years in some dim bazaar of Stamboul, forgotten under heaps of old stuffs. Dion thought of them as slumbering, made drowsy and finally unconscious by the fumes of incense and the exhalations from diapered perfume vials. As he looked at Mrs. Clarke, the bare and shining vision of Greece, evoked by the song Rosamund had just been singing, faded; the peculiar almost intellectually delicate atmosphere of Greece was gone; and he saw for a moment the umber mystery of Stamboul, lifted under tinted clouds of the evening beyond the waters of the Golden Horn; the great rounded domes and tapering speary minarets of the mosques, couchant amid the shadows and the trailing and gauzy smoke wreaths; a suggestion of dense masses of cypresses, those trees of the night which only in the night can be truly themselves, guarding the innumerable graves of the Turkish cemeteries.

From that moment he connected Mrs. Clarke in his mind with the cypress. Surely she must have spent very many hours wandering in those enormous and deserted gardens of the dead, where the very dust is poignant, and the cries of the sea come faintly up to Allah's children crumbling beneath the stone flowers and the little fezes of stone. Mrs. Clarke must love the cypress, for about her there was an atmosphere which suggested dimness and the gathering shadows of night.

Greece and Stamboul, the land of the early morning and the wonder-city of twilight; Rosamund and Mrs. Clarke; standing there for a moment, in the midst of the shifting crowd, Dion travelled, compared, connected and was alone in the soul's solitude.

Then Mrs. Chetwinde spoke to him, and he saw Bruce Evelin in the distance going towards Rosamund.

Mrs. Chetwinde told him that Rosamund had made a great advance.

"Now that she's given up singing professionally she's singing better than ever. That Grecian song is the distilled essence of Greece felt in our new way. For we've got our new way of feeling things. Rosamund tells us she repeated the words to Jennie Stileman, and Jennie had them set by a young Athenian who's over here studying English. He catches the butterfly, lets it flutter for a moment in his hand

and go. He doesn't jab a pin into it as our composers would. Oh, there's Cynthia! I hope she heard the last thing."

"Yes, she did."

"Ah?"

"I thought Mrs. Clarke was spending January in Paris."

"She came back to-day, and sent round to ask if she might come."

Mrs. Chetwinde wandered away, insouciant and observant as ever. Even at her own parties she always had an air of faintly detached indifference, never bothered about how "it" was "going." If it chose to stop it could, and her guests must put up with it.

When she left him Dion hesitated. Mrs. Clarke had just seen him and sent him a grave nod of recognition. Should he go to her? But the fair young man was still at her side, was still, with his weak red mouth, talking into her ear. Dion felt a strong distaste as he saw those moving lips under the brushed-up, almost ridiculously small, golden moustache; and just as he was conscious of this distaste Mrs. Clarke got rid of the young man, and spoke to a woman. Then she moved forward slowly. Mr. Chetwinde spoke to her, moving his ample fan-shaped beard, which always looked Assyrian, though he was profoundly English and didn't know it. She drew nearer to Dion as she answered Mr. Chetwinde, but in a wholly unconscious manner. To-night she looked more haggard even than usual, no doubt because of the journey from Paris. But Mrs. Chetwinde had once said of her: "Cynthia is made of iron." Could that be true? She was quite close to Dion now, and he was aware of a strange faint perfume which reminded him of Stamboul; and he realized here in Lowndes Square that Stamboul was genuinely fascinating, was much more fascinating than he had realized when he was in it.

Mrs. Clarke passed him without looking at him, and he felt sure quite unconscious of his nearness to her. Evidently she had forgotten all about him. Just after she had gone by he decided that of course he ought to go and speak to her, and that to-night he must introduce Rosamund to her. Not to do so would really be rude. Daventry was not there to be chivalrous. The illness of Beattie, and doubtless his own distress at the loss of his unborn child, had kept him away. Dion thought that he would be unchivalrous if he now neglected to make a point of speaking to Mrs. Clarke and of introducing his wife to her.

Having made up his mind on this he turned to follow Mrs. Clarke, and at once saw that Esmé Darlington, that smoother of difficult social places, was before him. A little way off he saw Mr. Darlington, with Rosamund well but delicately in hand, making for Mrs. Clarke somewhat with the gait of Agag. In a moment the thing was done. The two women were speaking to each other, and Rosamund had sent to Mrs. Clarke one of her inquiring looks. Then they sat down together on that red sofa to which Mrs. Clarke had led Dion for his first conversation with her. Esmé Darlington remained standing before it. The full acquaintance was joined at last.

Were they talking about the baby? Dion wondered, as for a moment he watched them, forgetting his surroundings. Rosamund was speaking with her usual swift vivacity. At home she was now often rather quiet, moving, Dion sometimes thought, in an atmosphere of wide serenity; but in society she was always full of sunshine and eager life. Something within her leaped up responsively at the touch of humanity, and to-night she had just been singing, and the whole of her was keenly awake. The contrast between her and Mrs. Clarke was almost startling: her radiant vitality emphasized Mrs. Clarke's curious, but perfectly natural, gravity; the rose in her cheeks, the yellow of her hair, the gaiety in her eyes, drew the attention to Mrs. Clarke's febrile and tense refinement, which seemed to have worn her body thin, to have drained the lustre out of her hair, to have fixed the expression of observant distress in her large and fearless eyes. Animal spirits played through Rosamund to-night; from Mrs. Clarke they were absent. Her haggard composure, confronting Rosamund's pure sparkle, suggested the comparison of a hidden and secret pool, steel coloured in the depths of a sunless forest, with a rushing mountain stream leaping towards the sea in a tangle of sun-rays. Dion realized for the first time that Mrs. Clarke never laughed, and scarcely ever smiled. He realized, too, that she really was beautiful. For Rosamund did not "kill" her; her delicacy of line and colourless clearness stood the test of nearness to Rosamund's radiant beauty. Indeed Rosamund somehow enhanced the peculiarly interesting character of Mrs. Clarke's personality, which was displayed, but with a sort of shadowy reticence, in her physique, and at the same time underlined its melancholy. So might a climbing rose, calling to the blue with its hundred blossoms, teach something of the dark truth of the cypress through which its branches are threaded.

But Mrs. Clarke would certainly never be Rosamund's stairway towards heaven.

Some one he knew spoke to Dion, and he found himself involved in a long conversation ; people moving hid the two women from him ; but presently the piano sounded again, and Rosamund sang that first favourite of hers and of Dion's, the "Heart ever faithful," recalling him to a dear day at Portofino where, in a cosy room, guarded by the wintry woods and the grey sea of Italy, he had felt the lure of a faithful spirit, and known the basis of clean rock on which Rosamund had built up her house of life. Bruce Evelin stood near to him while she sang it now, and once their eyes met and exchanged affectionate thoughts of the singer, which went gladly out of the gates eager to be read and understood.

When the melody of Bach was finished many people, impelled thereto by the hearty giant whom Mrs. Chetwinde had most strangely married, went downstairs to the black-and-white dining-room to drink champagne and eat small absurdities of various kinds. A way was opened for Dion to Mrs. Clarke, who was still on the red sofa. Dion noticed the fair young man hovering, and surely with intention in his large eyes, in the middle distance, but he went decisively forward, took Mrs. Clarke's listless yet imperative hand, and asked her if she would care to go down with him.

"Oh no ; I never eat at odd times."

"Do you ever eat at all ?"

"Yes, at my chosen moments. Do find another excuse."

"For going to eat ?"

"Or drink."

His reply was to sit down beside her. Mrs. Chetwinde's dining-room was large. People probably knew that, for the drawing-room emptied slowly. Even the fair young man went away to seek consolation below. Rosamund had descended with Bruce Evelin and Esmé Darlington. There was a pleasant and almost an intimate hush in the room.

"I heard you were to be in Paris this month," Dion said.

"I came back to-day."

"Aren't you tired ?"

"No. I want to speak to you about Jimmy, if you don't mind."

"Please do," said Dion rather earnestly, struck by a sort of little pang as he remembered the boy's urgent insistence that his visitor was to come again soon.

"I'm not quite satisfied with his tutor."

She began to ask Dion's advice with regard to the boy's bringing up, explaining that her husband had left that matter in her hands.

" He's very sorry and ashamed now, poor man, about his attacks on me, and tries to make up from a distance by trusting me completely with Jimmy. I don't bear him any malice, but of course the link between us is smashed and can't ever be resoldered. I'm asking you what I can't ask him because he's a weak man."

The implication was obvious and not disagreeable to Dion. He gave advice, and as he did so thought of Robin at ten.

Mrs. Clarke was a remarkably sensible woman, and agreed with his views on boys, and especially with his theory, suddenly discovered in the present heat of conversation, that to give them " backbone " was of even more importance than to develop their intellectual side. She spoke of her son in a way that was almost male.

" He mustn't be small," she said, evidently comprehending both soul and body in the assertion. " D'you know Lord Brayfield who was talking to me just now ? "

" You mean a fair man ? "

" Yes, with a meaningless mouth. Jimmy mustn't grow up into anything of that kind."

The conversation took a decidedly Doric turn as Mrs. Clarke developed her ideas of what a man ought to be. In the midst of it Dion remembered Dumeny, and could not help saying :

" But that type "—they had been speaking of what he considered to be Rosamund's type of man, once described by her as " a strong soul in a strong body, and a soft heart but not a softy's heart "—" is almost the direct opposite of the artistic type of man, isn't it ? "

Her large eyes looked " Well ? " at him, but she said nothing.

" I thought you cared so very much for knowledge and taste in a man."

" So I do. But Jimmy will never have knowledge and taste. He's the boisterous athletic type."

" And you're glad ? "

" Not sorry, at any rate. He'll just be a thorough man, if he's brought up properly, and that will do very well."

" I think you're very complex," Dion said, still thinking of Dumeny.

"Because I make friends in so many directions?"

"Well—yes, partly," he answered, wondering if she was reading his thought.

"Jimmy's not a friend but my boy. I know very well Monsieur Dumeny, for instance, whom you saw, and I dare say wondered about, at the trial; but I couldn't bear that my boy should develop into that type of man. You'll say I am a treacherous friend, perhaps. It might be truer to say I was born acquisitive and too mental. I never really liked Monsieur Dumeny; but I liked immensely his musical talent, his knowledge, his sure taste, and his power of making almost everything flower into interestingness. Do you know what I mean? Some people take light from your day; others add to its light and paint in wonderful shadows. If I went to the bazaars alone they were Eastern shops; if I went with Dumeny they were the Arabian Nights. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"The touch of his mind on a thing gave it life. It stirred. One could look into its heart and see the pulse beating. I care to do that, so I cared to go about with Monsieur Dumeny. But one doesn't love people for that sort of thing. In the people one loves one needs character, the right fibre in the soul. You ought to know that."

"Why?" he asked, almost startled.

"I was introduced to your wife just now."

"Oh!"

There was a pause. Then Dion said:

"I'm glad you have met."

"So am I," said Mrs. Clarke, in a voice that sounded more husky even than usual. "She sang that Greek song quite beautifully. I've just been telling her that I want to show her some curious songs I have heard in Turkey, and Asia Minor, at Brûsa. There was one man who used to sing to me at Brûsa outside the Mosquée Verte. Dumeny took down the melody for me."

"Did you like the 'Heart ever faithful'?"

"Of course it's excellent in that sledge-hammer sort of way, a superb example of the direct. Stamboul is very indirect. Perhaps it has coloured my taste. It's full of mystery. Bach isn't mysterious, except now and then—in rare bits of his passion music, for instance."

"I wonder if my wife could sing those Turkish songs."

"We must see. She sang that Greek song perfectly."

"But she's felt Greece," said Dion. "And I think there's something in her that——"

"Yes?"

"I only mean," he said, with reserve in his voice, "that I think there's something of Greece in her."

"She's got a head like a Caryatid."

"Yes," he said, with much less reserve. "Hasn't she?"

Mrs. Clarke had paid to his Rosamund two noble compliments, he thought; and he liked her way of payment, casual yet evidently sincere, the simple utterance of two thoughts in a mind that knew. He felt a sudden glow of real friendship for her, and, on the glow as it were, she said:

"Jimmy's quite mad about you."

"Still?" he blurted out, and was instantly conscious of a false step.

"He's got an extraordinary memory for a biceps, and then Jenkins talks about you to him."

As they went on talking people began coming up from the black-and-white dining-room. Dion said he would come to see Jimmy again, would visit the gymnasium in the Harrow Road one day when Jimmy was taking his lesson. Did Jimmy ever go on a Saturday? Yes, he was going next Saturday at four. Dion would look in next Saturday. Now Mrs. Clarke and Rosamund had met, and Mrs. Clarke evidently admired Rosamund in two ways, Dion felt quite different about his acquaintance with her. If it had already been agreed that Mrs. Clarke should show Rosamund Turkish songs, there was no need for further holding back. The relief which had come to him made Dion realize how very uncomfortable he had been about Mrs. Clarke in the immediate past. He was now thoroughly and cordially at his ease with her. They talked till the big drawing-room was full again, till Rosamund reappeared in the midst of delightful friends; talked of Jimmy's future, of the new tutor who must be found,—a real man, not a mere bloodless intellectual,—and, again, of Constantinople, to which Mrs. Clarke would return in April, against the advice of her friends, and in spite of Esmé Darlington's almost frantic protests, "because I love it, and because I don't choose to be driven out of any place by liars." Her last remark to him, and he thought it very characteristic of her, was this:

"Liberty's worth bitterness. I would buy it at the price of all the tears in my body."

It was, perhaps, also very characteristic that she made

the statement with a perfectly quiet gravity which almost concealed the evidently tough inflexibility beneath.

And then, when people were ready to go, Rosamund sang Brahm's " Wiegenlied."

" Guten Abend, gut' Nacht,
Tu'die Auglein zu
Von Engeln bewacht,
Schlaf in guter Ruh
Morgen fruh wenn Gott will,
Wirst du wieder geweckt."

Dion stood beside Bruce Evelin while Rosamund was singing this. She sang it with a new and wonderful tenderness which had come to her with Robin, and in her face, as she sang, there was a new and wonderful tenderness. The meaning of Robin in Rosamund's life was expressed to Dion by Rosamund in this song as it had never been expressed before. Perhaps it was expressed also to Bruce Evelin, for Dion saw tears in his eyes almost brimming over, and his face was contracted, as if only by a strong, even a violent, effort he was able to preserve his self-control.

As people began to go away Dion found himself close to Esmé Darlington.

" My dear fellow," said Mr. Darlington, with unusual abandon, " Rosamund has made a really marvellous advance —marvellous. In that 'Wiegenlied' she reached high-water mark. No one could have sung it more perfectly. What has happened to her ? "

" Robin," said Dion, looking him full in the face, and speaking with almost stern conviction.

" Robin ? " said Mr. Darlington, with lifted eyebrows.

Then people intervened.

In the carriage going home Rosamund was very happy. She confessed to the pleasure her success had given her.

" I quite loved singing to-night," she said. " That song about Greece was for you."

" I know, and the ' Wiegenlied ' was for Robin."

" Yes," she said.

She was silent ; then her voice came out of the darkness :

" For Robin, but he didn't know it."

" Some day he will know it."

Not a word was said about Mrs. Clarke that night.

On the following day, however, Dion asked Rosamund how she had liked Mrs. Clarke.

" I saw you talking to her with the greatest animation."

"Was I?" said Rosamund.

"And she told me it had been arranged that she should—no, I don't mean that; but she said she wanted to show you some wonderful Turkish songs."

"Did she? What a beautiful profile she has!"

"Ah, you noticed that!"

"Oh yes, directly."

"Didn't she mention the Turkish songs?"

"I believe she did, but only in passing, casually. D'you know, Dion, I've an idea that Greece is our country, not Turkey at all. You hate Constantinople, and I shall never see it, I'm sure. We are Greeks, and Robin has to be a Greek, too, in one way—a true Englishman, of course, as well. Do you remember the Doric boy?"

And off went the conversation to the hill of Drouva, and never came back to Turkey.

When Friday dawned Dion thought of his appointment for Saturday afternoon at the gymnasium in the Harrow Road, and began to wish he had not made it. Rosamund had not mentioned Mrs. Clarke again, and he began to fear that she had not really liked her, although her profile was beautiful. If Rosamund had not liked Mrs. Clarke, his cordial enthusiasm at Mrs. Chetwinde's—in retrospect he felt that his attitude and manner must have implied that—had been premature, even, perhaps, unfortunate. He wished he knew just what impression Mrs. Clarke had made upon Rosamund, but something held him back from asking her. He had asked her already once, but somehow the conversation had deviated—was it to Mrs. Clarke's profile?—and he had not received a direct answer. Perhaps that was his fault. But anyhow he must go to the gymnasium on the morrow. To fail in doing that after all that had happened, or rather that had not happened, in connexion with Mrs. Clarke would be really rude. He did not say anything about the gymnasium to Rosamund on Friday, but on the Saturday he told her what had been arranged.

"Her son, Jimmy Clarke, has taken a boyish fancy to me, it seems. I said I'd look in and see his lesson just for once."

"Is he a nice boy?"

"Yes, first-rate, I should think, rather a pickle, and likely to develop into an athlete. The father is awfully ashamed now of what he did—that horrible case, I mean—and is trying to make up for it."

"How?" said Rosamund simply.

"By giving her every chance with the boy."

"I'm glad the child likes you."

"I've only seen him once."

"Twice won't kill his liking," she returned affectionately. And then she went out of the room. She always had plenty to do. Small though he was, Robin was a marvellous consumer of his mother's time.

When Dion got to the gymnasium Mrs. Clarke and Jimmy were already there, and Jimmy, in flannels and a white sweater, his dark hair sticking up in disorder, and his face scarlet with exertion, was performing feats with an exerciser fixed to the wall, while Mrs. Clarke, seated on a hard chair in front of a line of heavy weights and dumb-bells, was looking on with concentrated attention. Jenkins was standing in front of Jimmy, loudly directing his movements with a stentorian: "One—two—one—two—one—two! Keep it up! No slackening! Put some guts into it, sir! One—two—one —two!"

As Dion came in Mrs. Clarke looked round and nodded; Jimmy stared, unable to smile because his mouth and lower jaw were working, and he had no superfluous force to spare for polite efforts; and Jenkins uttered a gruff, "Good day, sir."

"How are you, Jenkins?" returned Dion, in his most off-hand manner.

Then he jerked his hand at Jimmy with an encouraging smile, went over to Mrs. Clarke, shook her hand and remained standing beside her.

"Do you think he's doing it well?" she murmured, after a moment.

"Stunningly."

"Hasn't he broadened in the chest?"

"Rather!"

She looked strangely febrile and mental in the midst of the many appliances for developing the body. Rosamund, with her splendid physique and glowing health, would have crowned the gymnasium appropriately, have looked like the divine huntress transplanted to a modern city where still the cult of the body drew its worshippers. The Arcadian mountains, —Olympia in Elis,—Jenkins's "gym" in the Harrow Road— differing shrines but the cult was the same. Only the conditions of worship were varied. Dion glanced down at Mrs. Clarke. Never had she seemed more curiously exotic. Yet she did not look wholly out of place · and it occurred to him

that a perfectly natural person never looks wholly out of place anywhere.

"Face to the wall, sir!" cried Jenkins.

Jimmy found time for a breathless and half-inquiring smile at Dion as he turned and prepared for the most difficult feat.

"His jaw always does something extraordinary in this exercise," said Mrs. Clarke. "It seems to come out and go in again with a click. Jenkins says it's because Jimmy gets his strength from there."

"I know. Mine used to do just the same."

"Jimmy doesn't mind. It amuses him."

"That's the spirit!"

"He finishes with this."

"Already?" said Dion, surprised.

"You must have been a little late. How did you come?"

"On my bicycle. I had a puncture. That must have been it. And there was a lot of traffic."

"Keep it up, sir!" roared Jenkins imperatively. "What's the matter with that left arm?"

Click went Jimmy's lower jaw.

"Dear little chap!" muttered Dion, full of sympathetic interest. "He's doing splendidly."

"You really think so?"

"Couldn't be better."

"You understand boys?"

"Better than I understand women, I expect," Dion returned, with a sudden thought of Rosamund at home and the wonderful Turkish songs Mrs. Clarke wished to show to her.

Mrs. Clarke said nothing, and just at that moment Jenkins announced:

"That'll do for to-day, sir."

In a flood of perspiration Jimmy turned round, redder than ever, his chest heaving, his mouth open, and his eyes, but without any conceit, asking for a word of praise from Dion, who went to clap him on the shoulder.

"Capital! Hallo! What muscles we're getting! Eh, Jenkins?"

"Master Jimmy's not doing badly, sir. He puts his heart into it. That I must say."

Jimmy shone through the red and the perspiration.

"He sticks it," continued Jenkins, in his loud voice. "Without grit there's nothing done. That's what I always tell my pupils."

"I say"—began Jimmy, at last finding a small voice—"I say, Mr. Leith, you haven't hurried over it."

"Over what?"

"Letting me see you again. Why, it's——"

"Run along to the bath, sir. You've got to have it before you cool down," interposed the merciless Jenkins.

And Jimmy made off with an instant obedience which showed his private opinion of the god who was training him.

When he was gone Jenkins turned to Dion and looked him over.

"Haven't seen much of you, sir, lately," he remarked.

"No, I've been busy," returned Dion, feeling slightly uncomfortable as he remembered that the reason for his absence from the Harrow Road was listening to the conversation.

"Going to have a round with the gloves now you are here, sir?" pursued Jenkins.

Dion looked at Mrs. Clarke.

"Well, I hadn't thought of it," he said, rather doubtfully.

"Just as you like, sir."

"Do, Mr. Leith," said Mrs. Clarke, getting up from the hard chair, and standing close to the medicine ball with her back to the vaulting-horse. "Jimmy and I are going in a moment. You mustn't bother about us."

"Well, but how are you going home?"

"We shall walk. Of course have your boxing. It will do you good."

"You're right there, ma'am," said Jenkins, with a sort of stern approval. "Mr. Leith's been neglecting his exercises lately."

"Oh, I've been doing a good deal in odd times with the Rifle Corps."

"I don't know anything about that, sir."

"All right, I'll go and change," said Dion, who always kept a singlet and flannels at the gymnasium. "Then——" he turned to Mrs. Clarke as if about to say good-bye.

"Oh, Jimmy will want to see you for a moment after his bath. We'll say good-bye then."

"Yes, I should like to see him," said Dion, and went off to the dressing cubicles.

When he returned ready for the fray, with his arms bared to the shoulder, he found Jimmy, in trousers and an Eton jacket, with still damp hair sleeked down on his head, waiting with his mother, but not to say good-bye.

"We aren't going," he announced, in a voice almost shrill with excitement, as Dion came into the gymnasium. "The mater was all for a trot home, but Jenkins wishes me to stay. He says it'll be a good lesson for me. I mean to be a boxer."

"Why not?" observed the great voice of Jenkins. "It's the best sport in the world bar none."

"There!" said Jimmy. "And if I can't be anything else I'll be a bantam, that's what I'll be."

"Oh, you'll grow, sir, no doubt. We may see you among the heavy-weights yet."

"What's Mr. Leith? Is he a heavy-weight?" vociferated Jimmy. "Just look at his arms."

"You'll see him use them in a minute," observed Jenkins, covering Dion with a glance of almost grim approval, "and then you can judge for yourself."

"You can referee us, Jimmy," said Dion, smiling, as he pulled on the gloves.

"I say, by Jove, though!" said Jimmy, looking suddenly overwhelmed and very respectful.

He shook his head and blushed, then abruptly grinned.

"The mater had better do that."

They all laughed except Mrs. Clarke. Even Jenkins unbent, and his bass "Ha ha!" rang through the large vaulted room. Mrs. Clarke smiled faintly, scarcely changing the expression of her eyes. She looked unusually intent and, when the smile was gone, more than usually grave.

"I hope you don't mind our staying just for a few minutes," she said to Dion. "You see what he is!"

She looked at her boy, but not with deprecation.

"Of course not, but I'm afraid it will bore you."

"Oh no, it won't. I like to see skill of any kind."

She glanced at his arms.

"I'll get out of your way. Come, Jimmy!"

She took him by the arm and went back to the hard chair, while Dion and Jenkins in the middle of the floor stood up opposite to one another.

"Have you got a watch, Master Jimmy?" said Jenkins, looking over his shoulder at his pupil.

"Rather!" piped Jimmy.

"Well, then, you'd better time us if you don't referee us."

Jimmy sprang away from his mother.

"Keep out of our road, or you may chance to get a kidney punch that'll wind you. Better stand here. That's it. Three-minute rounds. Keep your eye on the watch."

"Am I to say 'Go'?" almost whispered Jimmy, tense with a fearful importance such as Cæsar and Napoleon never felt.

"Who else? You don't expect us to order ourselves about, do you?"

After a pause Jimmy murmured, "No" in a low voice. So might a mortal whisper a reply when interrogated from Olympus as to his readiness to be starter at a combat of the immortal gods.

"Now, then, watch in hand and no favouritism!" bellowed Jenkins, whose sense of humour was as boisterous as his firmness was grim. "Are we ready?"

Dion and he shook hands formally and lifted their arms, gazing at each other warily. Mrs. Clarke leaned foward in the chair which stood among the dumb-bells. Jimmy perspired and his eyes became round. He had his silver watch tight in his right fist. Jenkins suddenly turned his head and stared with his shallow and steady blue eyes, looking down from Olympus upon the speck of a mortal far below.

"Go!" piped Jimmy, in the voice of an ardent, but awe-struck mouse.

Homeric was that combat in the Harrow Road; to its starter and timekeeper a contest of giants, awful in force, in skill, in agility, in endurance. Dion boxed quite at his best that day, helped by his gallery. He fought to win, but he didn't win. Nobody won, for there was no knock-out blow given and taken, and, when appealed to for a decision on points, Jimmy, breathing stertorously from excitement, was quite unable to give the award. He could only stare at the two glorious heroes before him and drop the silver watch, glass downwards of course, on the floor, where its tinkle told of destruction. Later on, when he spoke, he was able to say: "By Jove!" which he presently amplified into, "I say, mater, by Jove—eh, wasn't it, though?"

"Not so bad, sir!" said Jenkins to Dion, after the latter had taken the shower bath. "You aren't as stale as I expected to find you, not near as stale. But I hope you'll keep it up now you've started with it again."

And Dion promised he would, put his bicycle on the top of a fourwheeler, sent it off to Westminster, and walked as far as Claridge's with Mrs. Clarke and Jimmy.

The boy made him feel tremendously intimate with Mrs. Clarke. The hero-worship he was receiving, the dancing of the blood through his veins, the glow of hard exercise, the verdict of Jenkins on his physical condition—all these things

combined spurred him to a joyous exuberance in which body and mind seemed to run like a matched pair of horses in perfect accord. Although not at all a conceited man, the feeling that he was being admired, even reverenced, was delightful to him, and warmed his heart towards the jolly small boy who kept along by his side through the busy streets. He and Jimmy talked in a comradely spirit, while Mrs. Clarke seemed to listen like one who has things to learn. She was evidently a capital walker in spite of her delicate appearance. To-day Dion began to believe in her iron health, and, in his joy of the body, he liked to think of it. After all delicacy, even in a woman, was a fault—a fault of the body, a sort of fretful imperfection.

"Are you strong?" he said to her, when Jimmy's voice ceased for a moment to demand from him information or to pour upon him direct statement.

"Oh yes. I've never been seriously ill in my life. Don't I look strong?" she asked.

"I don't think you do, but I feel as if you are."

"It's the wiry kind of strength, I suppose."

"The mater's a stayer," quoth Jimmy, and forthwith took up the wondrous tale with his hero, who began to consult him seriously on the question of "points."

"If you'd had to give a decision, Jimmy, which of us would have got it, Jenkins or I?"

Jimmy looked very grave and earnest.

"It's jolly difficult to tell a thing like that, isn't it?" he said, after a longish pause. "You see, you're both so jolly strong, aren't you?"

His dark eyes gazed at the bulk of Dion.

"Well, which is the quicker?" demanded Dion.

But Jimmy was not to be drawn.

"I think you're both as quick as—as cats," he returned diplomatically, seeking anxiously for the genuine sporting comparison that would be approved at the ring-side. "Don't you, mater?"

Mrs. Clarke huskily agreed. They were now nearing Claridge's, and Jimmy was insistent that Dion should come in and have a real jam tea with them.

"Do, Mr. Leith, if you have the time," said Mrs. Clarke, but without any pressure.

"The strawberry they have is ripping, I can tell you!" cried Jimmy, with ardour.

But Dion refused. Till he was certain of Rosamund's

attitude he felt he simply couldn't accept Mrs. Clarke's hospitality. He was obliged to get home that day. Mrs. Clarke did not ask why, but Jimmy did, and had to be put off with an evasion, the usual mysterious "business," which, of course, a small boy couldn't dive into and explore.

Dion thought Mrs. Clarke was going to say good-bye without any mention of Rosamund, but when they reached Claridge's she said :

"Your wife and I didn't decide on a day for the Turkish songs. You remember I mentioned them to you the other night ? I can't recollect whether she left it to me to fix a time, or whether I left it to her. Can you find out ? Do tell her I was stupid and forgot. Will you ?"

Dion said he would.

"I think they'll interest her. Now, Jimmy !"

But Jimmy hung on his god.

"I say, you'll come again now ! You promise ?"

What could Dion do ?

"You put your honour into it ?" pursued Jimmy, with desperate earnestness. "You swear ?"

"If I swear in the open street the police will take me up," said Dion jokingly.

"Not they ! One from the shoulder from you and I bet they lose enough claret to fill a bucket. You've given your honour, hasn't he, mater ?"

"Of course we shall see him again," said Mrs. Clarke, staring at Dion.

"What curious eyes she has !" Dion thought, as he walked homeward.

Did they ever entirely lose their under-look of distress ?

## CHAPTER IX

THAT evening Dion told Rosamund what Mrs. Clarke had said when he parted from her at Claridge's.

"I promised her I'd find out which it was," he added. "Do you remember what was said ?"

After a minute of silence, during which Rosamund seemed to be considering something, she answered :

"Yes, I do."

"Which was it?"

"Neither, Dion. Mrs. Clarke has made a mistake. She certainly spoke of some Turkish songs to me, but there was never any question of fixing a day for us to try them over together."

"She thinks there was."

"It's difficult to remember exactly what is said, or not said, in the midst of a crowd."

"But you remember?"

"Yes."

"Then you'd rather not try them over?"

"After what you've told me about Constantinople I expect I should be quite out of sympathy with Turkish music," she answered, lightly and smiling. "Let us be true to our Greek ideal."

She seemed to be in fun, but he detected firmness of purpose behind the fun.

"What shall I say to Mrs. Clarke?" he asked.

"I should just leave it. Perhaps she'll forget all about it."

Dion was quite sure that wouldn't happen, but he left it. Rosamund had determined not to allow Mrs. Clarke to be friends with her. He wished very much it were otherwise, not because he really cared for Mrs. Clarke, but because he liked her and Jimmy, and because he hated the idea of hurting the feelings of a woman in Mrs. Clarke's rather unusual situation. He might, of course, have put his point of view plainly to Rosamund at once. Out of delicacy he did not do this. His great love for Rosamund made him instinctively very delicate in all his dealings with her; it told him that Rosamund did not wish to discuss her reasons for desiring to avoid Mrs. Clarke. She had had them, he believed, before Mrs. Clarke and she had met. That meeting evidently had not lessened their force. He supposed, therefore, that she had disliked Mrs. Clarke. He wondered why, and tried to consider Mrs. Clarke anew. She was certainly not a disagreeable woman. She was very intelligent, thoroughbred beautiful in a peculiar way,—even Rosamund thought that,—ready to make herself pleasant, quite free from feminine malice, absolutely natural, interested in all the really interesting things. Beattie liked her; Daventry rejoiced in her; Mrs. Chetwinde was her intimate friend; Esmé Darlington had even made sacrifices for her; Bruce Evelin——

There Dion's thought was held up, like a stream that

encounters a barrier. What did Bruce Evelin think of Mrs. Clarke? He had not gone to the trial. But since he had retired from practice at the Bar he had never gone into court. Dion had often heard him say he had had enough of the Law Courts. There was no reason why he should have been drawn to them for Mrs. Clarke's sake, or even for Daventry's. But what did he think of Mrs. Clarke? Dion resolved to tell him of the rather awkward situation which had come about through his own intimacy—it really amounted almost to that—with Mrs. Clarke, and Rosamund's evident resolve to have nothing to do with her.

One day Dion went to Great Cumberland Place and told Bruce Evelin all the facts, exactly what Mrs. Clarke had said and done, exactly what Rosamund had said and done. As he spoke it seemed to him that he was describing a sort of contest, shadowy, perhaps, withdrawn and full of reserves, yet definite.

"What do you think of it?" he said, when he had told the comparatively little there was to tell.

"I think Rosamund likes to keep her home very quiet, don't you?"

"Yes, I do."

"Even her friends complain that she shuts them out."

"I know they do."

"She may not at all dislike Mrs. Clarke. She may simply not wish to add to her circle of friends."

"The difficulty is, that Mrs. Clarke is such friends with Beattie and Guy, and that I've got to know her quite well. Then there's her boy; he's taken a fancy to me. If Mrs. Clarke and Rosamund could just exchange calls it would be all right, but if they don't it really looks rather as if Rosamund—well, as if she thought the divorce case had left a slur on Mrs. Clarke. What I mean is, that I feel Mrs. Clarke will take it in that way."

"She may, of course."

"I wonder why she is so determined to make friends with Rosamund," blurted out Dion abruptly.

"You think she is determined?" said Bruce Evelin quietly.

"Yes. Telling you has made me feel that quite plainly."

"Anyhow, she'll be going back to Constantinople in April, and then your little difficulty will come to an end automatically."

Dion looked rather hard at Bruce Evelin. When he

spoke to Rosamund of Mrs. Clarke, Rosamund always seemed to try for a gentle evasion. Now Bruce Evelin was surely evading the question, and again Mrs. Clarke was the subject of conversation. Bruce Evelin was beginning to age rather definitely. He had begun to look older since Beattie was married. But his dark eyes were still very bright and keen, and one could not be with him for even a few minutes without realizing that his intellect was sharply alert.

"Isn't it strange that she should go back to live in Constantinople?" Dion said.

"Yes. Not many women in her position would do it."

"And yet there's reason in her contention that an innocent woman who allows herself to be driven away from the place she lived in is a bit of a coward."

"Beadon Clarke's transferred to Madrid, so Mrs. Clarke's reason—it was a diplomatic one—for living in Constantinople falls to the ground."

"Yes, that's true. But of course her husband and she have parted."

"Naturally. So she has the world to choose from."

"For a home, you mean? Yes. It's an odd choice, Constantinople. But she's not an ordinary woman."

"No, I suppose not," said Bruce Evelin.

Again Dion was definitely conscious of evasion. He got up to go away, feeling disappointed.

"Then you advise me to do nothing?" he said.

"What about, my boy?"

"About Mrs. Clarke."

"What could you do?"

Dion was silent.

"I think it's better to let women settle these little things among themselves. They have a deep and comprehensive understanding of trifles which we mostly lack. How's Robin?"

Robin again! Was he always to be the buffer between 5 Little Market Street and Mrs. Clarke?

"He's well and tremendously lively, and I honestly think he's growing better looking."

"Dear little chap!" said Bruce Evelin, with a very great tenderness in his voice. "Dion, we shall have to concentrate on Robin."

Dion looked at him with inquiry.

"Poor Beattie, I don't think she'll have a child."

"Beattie! Not ever?"

"I'm afraid not."

Dion was shocked and startled.

"But I haven't heard a word——" he began.

"No. Both Beattie and Guy feel it terribly. I had a talk with Beattie's doctor to-day."

"How dreadful! I am sorry. But——" He paused. He didn't like to ask intimate questions about Beattie.

"I'm afraid it is so," said Bruce Evelin. "You must let us all have a share in your Robin."

He spoke very quietly, but there was very deep, even intense, feeling in his voice.

"Poor Beattie!" Dion said.

And that, too, was an evasion.

He went away from Great Cumberland Place companioned by a sense of walking, not perhaps in darkness, but in a dimness which was not delicately beautiful like the dimness of twilight, but was rather akin to the semi-obscurity of fog.

Not a word more was said about Mrs. Clarke between Rosamund and Dion, and the latter never let Mrs. Clarke know about the Turkish songs, never fulfilled his undertaking to go and see Jimmy again. In a contest he could only be on Rosamund's side. The whole matter seemed to him unfortunate, even almost disagreeable, but, for him, there could be no question as to whether he wished Rosamund's or Mrs. Clarke's will to prevail. Whatever Rosamund's reason was for not choosing to be friends with Mrs. Clarke he knew it was not malicious or petty. Perhaps she had made a mistake about Mrs. Clarke. If so it was certainly an honest mistake. It was when he thought of his promise to Jimmy that he felt most uncomfortable about Rosamund's never expressed decision. Jimmy had a good memory. He would not forget. As to Mrs. Clarke, of course she now fully understood that Mrs. Dion Leith did not want to have anything to do with her. She continued to go often to Beattie and Daventry, consolidated her friendship with them. But Dion never met her in De Lorne Gardens. From Daventry he learnt that Mrs. Clarke had been extraordinarily kind to Beattie when Beattie's expectation of motherhood had faded away. Bruce Evelin's apprehension was well founded. For reasons which Daventry did not enter into Beattie could never now hope to have a child. Daventry was greatly distressed about it, but rather for Beattie's sake than for his own.

"I married Beattie because I loved her, not because I wanted to become a father," he said.

After a rather long pause he added, almost wistfully:

"As to Beattie's reasons for marrying me, well, Dion, I haven't asked what they were and I never shall. Women are mysterious, and I believe it's wisdom on our part not to try to force the locks and look into the hidden chambers. I'll do what I can to make up to Beattie for this terrible disappointment. It won't be nearly enough, but that isn't my fault. Rosamund and you can help her a little."

"How?"

"She—she's extraordinarily fond of Robin."

"Extraordinarily?" said Dion, startled almost by Daventry's peculiar emphasis on the word.

"Yes. Let her see a good deal of Robin if you can. Poor Beattie! She'll never have a child of her own to live in."

Dion told Rosamund of this conversation, and they agreed to encourage Beattie to come to Little Market Street as often as possible. Nevertheless Beattie did not come very often. It was obvious that she adored Robin, who was always polite to her; but perhaps delicacy of feeling kept her from making perpetual pilgrimages to the shrine before which an incense not hers was for ever ascending; or perhaps she met a gaunt figure of Pain in the home of her sister. However it was her visits were rather rare, and no persuasion availed to make her come oftener. At this time she and Dion's mother drew closer together. The two women loved and understood each other well. Perhaps between them there was the link of loneliness, or perhaps there was another link.

Early in April Dion received one morning the following letter:

"CLARIDGE'S HOTEL,
6 *April*

"DEAR MR. LEITH,—I feel pretty rotten about you. I thought when once a clever boxer gave his honour on a thing it was a dead cert. The mater wouldn't let me write before, though I've been at her over it every day for weeks. But now we're going away, so she says I may write and just tell you. If you want to say good-bye could you telephone, she says. P'raps you don't. P'raps you've forgotten us. I can tell you Jenkins is sick about it all and your never going to the Gim. He said to me to-day, 'I don't know what's come

over Mr. Leith.' No more do I. The mater says you're a busy man and have a kid. I say a true friend is never too busy to be friendly. I really do feel rotten over it, and now we are going.—Your affectionate

JIMMY"

Dion showed Rosamund the letter, and telephoned to say he would call on the following day. Jimmy's voice answered on the telephone and said :

"I say, you have been beastly to us. The mater says nothing, but we thought you liked us. Jenkins says that between boxers there's always a——"

At this point Jimmy was cut off in the flower of his reproaches.

On arriving at Claridge's Dion found Jimmy alone. Mrs. Clarke was out but would return in a moment. Jimmy received his visitor not stiffly but with exuberant and vociferous reproaches, and vehement demands to know the why and wherefore of his unsportsmanlike behaviour.

"I've ordered you a real jam tea all the same," he concluded, with a magnanimity which did him honour, and which, as he was evidently aware, proved him to be a true sportsman.

"You're a trump," said Dion, pulling the boy down beside him on a sofa.

"Oh, well—but, I say, why didn't you come ? "

He stared with the mercilessly inquiring eyes of boyhood.

"I don't think I ever said on my honour that I would come."

"But you did. You swore."

"No. I was afraid of the policeman."

"I say, what rot ! As if you could be afraid of anyone ! Why, Jenkins says you're the best pupil he's ever had. Why didn't you ? Don't you like us ? "

"Of course I do."

"The mater says you're married, and married men have no time to bother about other people's kids. Is that true ? "

"Well, of course there's a lot to be done in London, and I go to business every day."

"You've got a kid, haven't you ? "

"Yes ! "

"It's a boy, isn't it ? "

"Yes."

"I say, how old is it ? "

"A year and a month old, or a little over."

Jimmy's face expressed satire.

"A year and a month!" he repeated. "Is that all? Then it can't be much good yet, can it?"

"It can't box or do exercises as you can. You are getting broad."

"Rather! Box? I should think not! A kid of a year old boxing! I should like to see it with Jenkins."

He began to giggle. By the time Mrs. Clarke returned and they sat down to the real jam tea, the ice was in fragments.

"I believe you were right, mater, and it was all the kid that prevented Mr. Leith from sticking to his promise," Jimmy announced, as he helped Dion to "the strawberry," with a liberality which betokened an affection steadfast even under the stress of blighting circumstances.

"Of course I was right," returned his mother gravely.

Dion was rather glad that she looked away from him as she said it.

Her manner to him was unchanged. Evidently she was a woman not quick to take offence. He liked that absence of all "touchiness" from her, and felt that a man could rest comfortably on her good breeding. But this very good breeding increased within him a sense of discomfort which amounted almost to guilt. He tried to smother it by being very jolly with Jimmy, to whom he devoted most of his attention. When tea was over Mrs. Clarke said to her son:

"Now, Jimmy, you must go away for a little while and let me have a talk with Mr. Leith."

"Oh, mater, that's not fair. Mr. Leith's my pal. Aren't you, Mr. Leith? Why, even Jenkins says——"

"You shall see Mr. Leith again before he goes."

"I should rather think so. Why——"

He looked at his mother, suddenly became very grave, and went slowly out of the room. It was evident to Dion that Mrs. Clarke knew how to make people obey her when she was in earnest.

As soon as Jimmy had gone Mrs. Clarke rang for the waiter to take away the tea-table.

"Then we shan't be bothered," she remarked. "I hate people coming in and out when I'm trying to have a quiet talk."

"So do I," said Dion.

The waiter rolled the table out gently and shut the door.

Mrs. Clarke sat down on a sofa.

"Do light a cigar," she said. "I know you want to smoke, and I'll have a cigarette."

She drew out of a little case which lay on a table beside her a Turkish cigarette and lit it, while Dion lighted a cigar.

"So you're really going back to Constantinople?" he began. "And taking Jimmy with you?"

"Yes, for a time. My husband raises no objection. In a year I shall send Jimmy to Eton. Lady Ermyntrude is furious, of course, and has tried to stir up my husband. But her influence with him is dead. He's terribly ashamed at what she made him do."

"The action?"

"Yes. It was she who made him think me guilty against his real inner conviction. Now, poor man, he realizes that he dragged me through the dirt without reason. He's ashamed to show his face in the Clubs, and nearly resigned from diplomacy. But he's a valuable man, and they've persuaded him to go to Madrid."

"Why go back to Constantinople?"

"Merely to show I'm not afraid to and that I won't be driven from my purpose by false accusations."

"And you love it, of course."

"Yes. My flat will be charming, I think. Some day you'll see it."

Dion was silent in surprise.

"Don't you realize that?" she asked, staring at him.

"I think it very improbable that I shall ever go back to Constantinople."

"And I'm sure you will."

"Why are you sure?"

"That I can't tell you. Why is one sometimes sure that certain things will come about?"

"Do you claim to be psychic?" said Dion.

"I never make verbal claims. Now about Jimmy."

She discussed for a little while seriously her plans for the boy's education while he stayed with her. She had found a tutor, a young Oxford man, who would accompany them to Turkey, but she wanted Dion's advice on certain points. He gave it, wondering all the time why she consulted him after his neglect of her and of her son, after his failure to accept invitations and to fulfil pledges (or to stick to the understandings which were almost pledges), after the tacit refusals of Rosamund. Did it not show a strange persistence, even

a certain lack of pride in her? Perhaps she heard the haunting questions which he did not utter, for she suddenly turned from the topic of the boy and said:

"You're surprised at my bothering you with all this when we really know each other so slightly. It is unconventional; but I shall never learn the way to conventionality in spite of all poor Esmé's efforts to shepherd me into the path he thinks narrow and I find broad—a way that leads to destruction. I feel you absolutely understand boys, and know by instinct the best way with them. That's why I *still* come to you."

She paused. She had deliberately driven home her meaning by a stress on one word. Now she sat looking at him, with a wide-eyed and deeply grave fixity, as if considering what more she should say. Dion murmured something about being very glad if he could help her in any way with regard to Jimmy.

"You can be conventional," she remarked. "Well, why not? Most English people are perpetually playing for safety."

"I wish you wouldn't go back to Constantinople," said Dion.

"Why?"

"I believe it's a mistake. It seems to me like throwing down a defiance to your world."

"But I never play for safety."

"But think of the danger you've passed through."

The characteristic distressed look deepened in her eyes till they seemed to him tragic. Nevertheless, fearlessness still looked out of them.

"What should I gain by doing that?" she asked.

"Esmé Darlington once said you were a wild mind in an innocent body. I believe he was right. But it seems to me that some day your wild mind may get you into danger again and that perhaps you won't escape from it unscathed a second time."

"How quiet and safe and calm it must be at Number 5!" she rejoined, without any irony.

"You wouldn't care for that sort of life. You'd find it humdrum," said Dion, with simplicity.

"You never would," she said, still without irony, without even the hint of a sneer. "And the truth is that the humdrum is created not by a way of living but by those who follow it. Your wife and the humdrum could never occupy the same house. I shall always regret that I didn't see some-

thing of her. Do give her a cordial 'au revoir' from me. You'll hear of me again. Don't be frightened about me in your kind and chivalrous heart. I am grateful to you for several things. I'm not going to give the list now. That would either bore you, or make you feel shy. Some day, perhaps, I shall tell you what they are, in a caïque on the sweet waters of Asia or among the cypresses of Eyub."

With the last sentence she transported Dion, as on a magic carpet, to the unwise life. Her husky voice changed a little; her face changed a little too; the one became slower and more drowsy; the other less haggard and fixed in its expression of distress. This woman had her hours of happiness, perhaps even of exultation. For a moment Dion envisaged another woman in her. And when he had bidden her good-bye, and had received the tremendous farewells of Jimmy, he realized that she had made upon him an impression which, though soft, was certainly deep. He thought of how a cushion looks when it lies on a sofa in an empty room, indented by the small head of a woman who has been thinking, thinking alone. For the moment he was out of shape, and Mrs. Clarke had made him so.

In the big hall, as he passed out, he saw Lord Brayfield standing in front of the bureau speaking to the hall porter.

"Some day, perhaps, I shall tell you what they are, in a caïque on the sweet waters of Asia or among the cypresses of Eyub."

Dion smiled as he recalled Mrs. Clarke's words, which had been spoken fatalistically. Then his face became very grave.

Suddenly there dawned upon him, like a vision in the London street, one of the vast Turkish cemeteries, dusty, forlorn, disordered, yet full of a melancholy touched by romance; and among the thousands of graves, through the dark thickets of cypresses, he was walking with Mrs. Clarke, who looked exactly like Echo.

A newsboy at the corner was crying the latest horror—a woman found stabbed in Hyde Park. But to Dion his raucous and stunted voice sounded like a voice from the sea, a strange and sad cry lifted up between Europe and Asia.

# BOOK III

# LITTLE CLOISTERS

## CHAPTER I

MORE than a year and a half passed away, and in the autumn of 1899 the Boer War broke out and the face of England was changed; for the heart of England began to beat more strongly than usual, and the soul of England was stirred. The winter came, and in many Englishmen a hidden conflict began; in their journey through life they came abruptly to a parting of the ways, stood still and looked to the right and the left, balancing possibilities, searching their natures and finding within them strange hesitations, recoils, affirmations, determined nobilities.

Dion had followed the events which led up to the fateful decision of Wednesday, October the eleventh, with intense interest. As the October days drew on he had felt the approach of war. It came up, this footfall of an enemy, it paced at his side. Would he presently be tried by this enemy, would it test him and find out exactly what metal he was made of? He wondered, but from the moment when the first cloud showed itself on the horizon he had a presentiment that this distant war was going to have a strong effect on his life.

On the afternoon of October the eleventh he walked slowly home from the City alone. There was excitement in the air. The voices of the newsvendors sounded fateful in his ears; the faces of the passers-by looked unusually eager and alert. As he made his way through the crowd he did not debate the rights and wrongs of the question about to be decided between Briton and Boer. His mind avoided thoughts about politics. For him, perhaps strangely, the issue had already narrowed down to a personal question: "What is this war going to mean to me?"

He asked himself this; he put the question again and again. Nevertheless it was answered somewhere within him almost as soon as it was put. If there came a call for volunteers he would be one of the many who would answer it. The call might not come, of course; the war might be short, a hole-and-corner affair soon ended. He told himself that, and, as he did so, he felt sure that the call would come.

He knew he would not hold back; but he knew also that his was not the eagerness to go of the man assumed by journalists to be the typical Englishman. He was not mad to plunge into the great game, reckless of the future and shouting for the fray. He was not one of the "hard-bitten, raw-boned men with keen eyes and ready for anything" beloved of the journalists, who loom so large in the public eye when "big things are afoot." On that autumn evening, as he walked homeward, Dion knew the bunkum that is given out to the world as truth, knew that brave men have souls undreamed of in newspaper offices. He perceived the figure of war just then as a figure terribly austere, grim, cold, harsh—a figure stripped of all pleasant flesh and sweet colouring, of all softness and warm humanity. It accompanied him like an iron thing which nevertheless was informed with life. Joy withered beside it, yet it had the power to make things bloom. Already he knew that as he had not known it before.

In the crowded Strand the voices of the newsvendors were insistently shrill, raucous, almost fierce. As he heard them he faced tests. Many things were going to be put to the test in the almost immediate future. Among them perhaps would be Rosamund's exact feeling for him.

Upon the hill of Drouva they had slept in the same tent, husband and wife, more than three years ago; in green and remote Elis they had sat together before the Hermes, hidden away from the world and hearing the antique voices; in Westminster Robin was theirs; yet this evening, facing in imagination the tests of war, Dion knew that Rosamund's exact feeling for him was still a secret from him. If he went to South Africa that secret must surely be revealed. Rosamund would inevitably find out then the nature of her feeling for him, how much she cared, and even if she did not tell him how much she cared he would know, he could not help knowing.

He knew with a terrible thoroughness this evening how much he cared for her.

He considered Robin.

Robin was now more than two and a half years old; a personage in a jersey and minute knickerbockers, full of dancing energy and spirits, full of vital interest in the smaller problems of life. He was a fidget and he was a talker. Out of a full mind he poured forth an abundant stream of words, carelessly chosen at times, yet on the whole apt to the occasion. His intelligence was marked, of course,—what very young child's is not?—and he had inherited an ample store of the *joie de vivre* which distinguished his mother. The homeliness of feature which had marked him out in the baldhead stage of his existence had given place to a dawning of what promised to be later on distinct good looks. Already he was an attractive-looking child, with a beautiful mouth, a rather short and at present rather snub nose, freckled on the bridge, large blue eyes, and a forehead, temples and chin which hinted at Rosamund's. His hair was now light brown, and had a bold, almost an ardent, wave in it. Perhaps Robin's most marked characteristic at this time was ardour. Occasionally the mildly inquiring expression which Dion had been touched by in the early days came to his little face. He could be very gentle and very clinging, and was certainly sensitive. Often imagination, in embryo as it were, was shown by his eyes. But ardour informed and enveloped him, he swam in ardour and of ardour he was all compact. Even the freckles which disfigured, or adorned, the bridge of his nose looked ardent. Rosamund loved those freckles in a way she could never have explained, loved them with a strength and tenderness which issued from the very roots of her being. To her they were Robin, the dearest part of the dearest thing on earth. Many of her kisses had gone to those little freckles.

Dion might have to part not only from Rosamund but also from Robin.

He had become very fond of his little son. The detachment which had perhaps marked his mental attitude to the baby did not mark his mental attitude to the boy. In the Robin of to-day, the jerseyed and knickerbockered person, with the incessantly active legs, the eager eyes, the perpetually twittering voice, Dion was conscious of the spirit of progress. Already he was able to foresee the small schoolboy, whom only a father could properly help and advise in regard to many aspects of the life ahead; already he was looking forward to the time when he could take a hand in the

training of Robin. It would be very hard to go away from that little bit of quicksilver, very hard indeed.

But the thought which made his heart sink, which brought with it almost a sensation of mortal sickness to his soul, was the thought of parting from Rosamund. As he walked down Parliament Street he imagined the good-bye to her on the eve of sailing for South Africa. That acute moment might never come. This evening he felt it on the way. Whatever happened it would be within his power to stay with Rosamund, for there was no conscription in England. If he went to South Africa then the action of leaving her would be deliberate on his part. Was there within him something that was stronger than his love for her? There must be, he supposed, for he knew that if men were called for, and if Rosamund asked, or even begged him not to go, he would go nevertheless.

Vaporous Westminster, dark and leaning to the great river, for how long he had not seen it, or realized what it meant to him! Custom had blinded his eyes and had nearly closed his mind to it. The day's event had given him back sight and knowledge. This evening his familiarity with Westminster bred in him intensity of vision and apprehension. It seemed to him that scales had fallen from his eyes, that for the first time he really saw Parliament Street, the Houses of Parliament, Westminster Bridge, the river. The truth was, that for the first time he really felt them, felt that he belonged to them and they to him, that their blackness in the October evening was part of the colour of him, that the Westminster sounds, chimes, footfalls, the dull roar of traffic, human voices from street, from bridge, from river, harmonized with the voices in him, in the very depths of him. This was England, this closeness, this harmony of the outer to and with the inner, this was England saying to one of her sons, "You belong to me and I to you." The race spoke and the land, they walked with Dion in the darkness.

For he did not go straight home. He walked for a long time beside the river. By the river he kissed Robin and he said good-bye to Rosamund, by the river he climbed upon the troopship, and he saw the fading of England on the horizon, and he felt the breath of the open sea. And in the midst of a crowd of men going southward he knew at last what loneliness was. The lights that gleamed across the river were the last lights of England that he would see for many a day, perhaps for ever; the chime from the clock-tower

was the last of the English sounds. He endured in imagination a phantom bitterness of departure which seemed abominably real; then suddenly he was recalled from a possible future to the very definite present.

He met by the river two men, sleek people in silk hats, with plump hands—hands which looked as if they were carefully fed on very nutritious food every day by their owners—warmly covered. As they passed him one of these know-alls said to the other:

"Oh, it'll only be a potty little war. What can a handful of peasants do against our men? I'll lay you five to one in sovereigns two months will see it out."

"I dare say you will," returned the other, in a voice that was surely smiling, "but I won't take you."

"By Jove, what a plunger I am!" thought Dion. "Racing ahead like a horse that's lost his wits. Ten to one they'll never want volunteers."

But Westminster still looked exceptional, full of the inner meaning, and somewhere within him a voice still said, "You will go." Nevertheless he was able partly to put off his hybrid feeling, half-dread, half-desire. The sleek people in the silk hats had made their little effect on the stranger. "The man in the street is often right," Dion said to himself; though he knew that the man in the street is probably there, and remains there, because he is so often wrong.

When he reached Little Market Street Dion told Rosamund there would be war in South Africa, but he did not even hint at his thought that volunteers might be called for, at his intention, if they were, to offer himself. To do that would not only be absurdly premature, but might even seem slightly bombastic, an uncalled-for study in heroics. He kept silence. The battles of Ladysmith, of Magersfontein, of Stormberg, of Colenso, unsettled the theories of sleek people in silk hats. England came to a very dark hour while Robin was playing with a new set of bricks which his Aunt Beattie had given him. Dion began to understand the rightness of his instinct that evening by the river, when Westminster had spoken to him and England had whispered in his blood. As he had thought of things, so they were going to be. The test was very great. It was as if already it stood by him, a living entity, and touched him with an imperious hand. Sometimes he looked at Rosamund and saw great stretches of sea rolling under great stretches of sky. The barrier! How would he be able to bear the long separation from Rosamund? The

habit of happiness in certain circumstances can become the scourge of a man. Men who were unhappy at home could go to the war with a lighter heart than he.

Just before Christmas the call for men came, and in Dion a hesitation was born. Should he go and offer himself at once without telling Rosamund, or should he tell her what he wished to do and ask her opinion ? Suppose she were against his going out ? He could not ask her advice if he was not prepared to take it. What line did he wish her to take ? By what course of action would such a woman as Rosamund prove depth of love ? Wouldn't it be natural for a woman who loved a man to raise objections to his going out to fight in a distant country ? Wouldn't she prove her love by raising objections ? On the other hand, wouldn't a woman who loved a man in the greatest way be driven by the desire to see him rise up in an emergency and prove his manhood at whatever cost to her ?

Dion wanted one thing of Rosamund at this moment, wanted it terribly, with longing and with fear,—the proof absolute and unhesitating of her love for him.

He decided to volunteer without telling her beforehand that he meant to do so. He told no one of his intention except his Uncle Biron, whom he was obliged to consult as they were partners in business.

" You're right, my boy," said his uncle. " We'll get on as best we can without you. We shall miss you, of course. Since you've been married your energy has been most praiseworthy, but, of course, the nation comes before the firm. What does your mother say ? "

Dion was struck with a sense of wonder by this question. Why didn't his uncle ask him what Rosamund had said ?

" I haven't spoken to her," he answered.

" She'll wish you to go in spite of all," said his uncle gravely.

" I haven't even spoken to Rosamund of my intention to enlist."

His uncle looked surprised, even for a moment astonished, but he only said :

" She's rather on heroic lines, I should judge. There's something spacious in her nature."

" Yes," said Dion.

He pledged his uncle to silence. Then they talked business.

From that moment Dion wondered how his mother would

take his decision. That he had not wondered before proved to himself the absorbing character of his love for his wife. He loved his mother very much, yet, till his uncle had spoken about her in the office, he had only thought about Rosamund in connexion with his decision to enlist. The very great thing had swallowed up the big thing. There is something ruthless, almost at moments repellent, in the very great thing which rules in a man's life. But his mother would never know.

That was what he said to himself, unconscious of the fact that his mother had known and had lived alone with her knowledge for years.

He offered himself for service in South Africa with the City Imperial Volunteers. The doctor passed him. He was informed that he would be sworn in at the Guildhall on 4th January. The great step was taken.

Why had he taken it without telling Rosamund he was going to take it ?

As he came out into the dark winter evening he wondered about that almost vaguely. He must have had a driving reason, but now he did not know what it was. How was Rosamund going to take it ? Suddenly he felt guilty, as if he had done her a wrong. They were one flesh, and in such a vital matter he had not consulted her. Wasn't it abominable ?

As soon as he was free he went straight home.

This time, as he walked homeward, Dion held no intercourse with Westminster. If he heard the chimes, the voices, the footfalls, he was not conscious of hearing them ; if he saw the vapours from the river, the wreaths of smoke from the chimneys, the lights gleaming in the near houses and far away across the dark mystery of the water, he did not know that he saw them. In himself he was imprisoned, and against the great city in which he walked he had shut the doors.

He arrived at his house and put his hand in his pocket to get his latch-key. Before he was able to draw it forth the green door was opened and Beatrice came out.

" Dion ! " she said, startled.

" You nearly ran over me ! "

" What is it ? " she asked. " What have you done ? "

" But——"

" I know ! " she interrupted.

She put out her hand and took hold of his coat sleeve.

The action was startlingly impulsive in Beatrice, who was always so almost plaintive, so restrained, so dim.

"But you can't!"

"I do. You are going to South Africa."

He said nothing. How could he tell Beatrice before he told Rosamund?

"When are you going?"

"Is Rosamund in the house, Beattie?" he asked, very gently.

Beatrice flushed deeply, painfully, and took her hand from his sleeve.

"Yes. I've been playing with Robin, building castles with the new bricks. Good-bye, Dion."

She went past him and down the small street rather quickly. He stood for a moment looking after her; then he turned into the house. As he shut the door he heard a chord struck on the piano upstairs in Rosamund's sitting-room. He took off his coat and hat and came into the little hall. As he did so he heard Rosamund's voice beginning to sing Brahms's "Wiegenlied" very softly. He guessed that she was singing to an audience of Robin. The bricks had been put away after the departure of Aunt Beattie, and now Robin was being sung towards sleep. How often would he be sung to by Rosamund in the future when his father would not be there to listen! Robin was going to have his mother all to himself, and Rosamund was going to have her little son all to herself. But they did not know that yet. The long months of their sacred companionship stretched out before the father as he listened to the lullaby, which he could only just hear. Rosamund had mastered the art of withdrawing her voice and yet keeping it perfectly level.

When the song was finished, whispered away into the spaces where music disperses to carry on its sweet mission, Dion went up the stairs, opened the door of Rosamund's room, and saw something very simple, and, to him, very memorable. Rosamund had turned on the music-stool and put her right arm round Robin, who, in his minute green jersey and green knickerbockers, stood leaning against her with the languid happiness and half-wayward demeanour of a child who has been playing, and who already feels the soothing influence of approaching night with its gift of profound sleep. Robin's cheeks were flushed, and in his blue eyes there was a curious expression, drowsily imaginative, as if he were welcoming dreams which were only for him. With a faint smile on his

small rosy lips he was listening while Rosamund repeated to him in English the words of the song she had just been singing. Dion heard her say :

"Sink to slumber, good-night,
And angels of light
With love you shall fold
As the Christ Child of old."

"There's Fa!" whispered Robin, sending to Dion a semi-roguish look.

Dion held up his hand and formed "Hush!" with his lips. Rosamund finished the verse :

"While the stars dimly shine
May no sorrow be thine."

She bent and kissed Robin on the top of his head just in the middle, choosing the place, and into his hair she breathed a repetition of the last words, "May no sorrow be thine."

And Dion was going to the war.

Robin slipped from his mother's arm gently and came to his father.

"'Ullo, Fa!" he observed confidentially.

Dion bent down.

"Hallo, Robin!"

He picked the little chap up and gave him a kiss. What a small bundle of contentment Robin was at that moment. In South Africa Dion often remembered just how Robin had felt to him then, intimate and a mystery, confidential, sleepy with happiness, a tiny holder of the Divine, a willing revelation and a soft secret. So much in so little!

"You've been playing with Auntie Beattie."

Robin acknowledged it.

"Auntie's putty good at bricks."

"Did you meet Beattie, Dion?" asked Rosamund.

"On the doorstep."

He thought of Beatrice's question. There was no question in Rosamund's face. But perhaps his own face had changed.

A tap came on the door.

"Master Robin?" said nurse, in a voice that held both inquiry and an admonishing sound.

When Robin had gone off to bed, walking vaguely and full of the forerunners of dreams, Dion knew that his hour had come. He felt a sort of great stillness within him, stillness of presage, perhaps, or of mere concentration, of the will to be, to do, to endure, whatever came. Rosamund shut down the

lid of the piano and came away from the music-stool. Dion looked at her, and thought of the maidens of the porch and of the columns of the Parthenon.

"Rosamund," he said,—that stillness within him forbade any preparation, any "leading up,"—"I've joined the City Imperial Volunteers."

"The City Imperial Volunteers?" she said.

He knew by the sound of her voice that she had not grasped the meaning of what he had done. She looked surprised, and a question was in her brown eyes.

"Why? What are they? I don't understand. And the Artists' Rifles?"

"I've got my transfer from them. I've joined for the war."

"The war? Do you mean——?"

She came up to him, looking suddenly intent.

"Do you mean you have volunteered for active service in South Africa?"

"Yes."

"Without consulting me?"

Her whole face reddened, almost as it had reddened when she spoke to him about the death of her mother.

"Yes. I haven't signed on yet, but the doctor has passed me. I'm to be sworn in at the Guildhall on the fourth, I believe. We shall sail very soon, almost directly, I suppose. They want men out there."

He did not know how brusquely he spoke; he was feeling too much to know.

"I didn't think you could do such a thing without speaking to me first. My husband, and you——!"

She stopped abruptly, as if afraid of what she might say if she went on speaking. Two deep lines appeared in her forehead. For the first time in his life Dion saw an expression of acute hostility in her eyes. She had been angry, or almost angry with him for a moment in Elis, when he broke off the branch of wild olive; but she had not looked like this. There was something piercing in her expression that was quite new to him.

"I felt I ought to do it," he said dully.

"Did you think I should try to prevent you?"

"No. I scarcely know what I thought."

"Have you told your mother?"

"No. I had to tell Uncle Biron because of the business. Nobody else knows."

And then suddenly he remembered Beattie.

"At least I haven't told anyone else."

"But some one else does know—knew before I did."

"I saw Beattie just now, as I said. I believe she guessed. I didn't tell her."

"But how could she guess such a thing if you gave her no hint?"

"That's just what I have been wondering."

Rosamund was silent. She went away from him and stood by the fire, turning her back to him. He waited for a moment, then he went to the hearth.

"Don't you think perhaps it's best for a man to decide such a thing quite alone? It's a man's job, and each man must judge for himself what he ought to do in such a moment. If you had asked me not to go I should have felt bound to go all the same."

"But I should have said 'Go.' Then you never understood me in Greece? All our talks told you nothing about me? And now Robin is here—you thought I should ask you not to go!"

She turned round. She seemed almost passionately surprised.

"Perhaps—in a way—I wished to think that."

"Why? Did you wish to despise me?"

"Rosamund! As if I could ever do that."

"If you did a despicable thing I should despise you."

"Don't! I haven't much more time here."

"I never, never shall be able to understand how you could do this without telling me beforehand that you were going to do it."

"It wasn't from any want of respect or love for you."

"I can't talk about it any more just now."

The flush on her face deepened. She turned and went out of the room.

Dion was painfully affected. He had never before had a serious disagreement with Rosamund. It was almost intolerable to have one now on the eve of departure from her. He felt like one who had committed an outrage out of the depths of a terrible hunger, a hunger of curiosity. He knew now why he had volunteered for active service without consulting Rosamund. Obscurely his nature had spoken, saying, "Put her to the test and make the test drastic." And he had obeyed the command. He had wanted to know, to find out suddenly, in a moment, the exact truth

of years. And now he had roused a passion of anger in Rosamund.

Her anger wrapped him in pain such as he had never felt till now.

The house seemed full of menace. In the little room the atmosphere was changed. He looked round it and his eyes rested on the Hermes. He went up to it and stood before it.

Instantly he felt again the exquisite calm of Elis. The face of the Hermes made the thought of war seem horrible and ridiculous. Men had learnt so much when Praxiteles created his Hermes, and they knew so little now. The enigma of their violence was as great as the enigma of the celestial calm which the old Greeks had perpetuated to be for ever the joy and the rest of humanity. And he, Dion, was going to take an active part in violence. The enchanting serenity of the Hermes, which brought all Elis before him, with its green sights and its wonderful sounds, of the drowsy insects in the sunshine, of the sheep-bells, and of the pines whose voices hold within them all the eternal secrets, increased the intensity of his misery. He realized how unstable are the foundations of human happiness, and his house of life seemed crumbling about him.

Presently he went downstairs to his room and wrote letters to his mother and to Bruce Evelin, telling them what he had done.

When he had directed and stamped these letters he thought of Beattie and Guy. Beattie knew. What was it which had led her so instantly to a knowledge denied to Rosamund ? Rosamund had evidently not noticed any difference in him when he came in that evening. But, to be sure, Robin had been there.

Robin had been there.

Dion sat before the writing-table for a long while doing nothing. Then a clock struck. He had only half an hour to spare before dinner would be ready. Quickly he wrote a few words to Beattie :

" My dear Beattie,—You were right. I have volunteered for active service and shall soon be off to South Africa. I don't know yet exactly when we shall start, but I expect they'll hurry us off as quickly as they can. Men are wanted out there badly. Lots of fellows are coming forward. I'll tell you more when I see you again. Messages to Guy.—
Yours affectionately,
Dion "

It was not an eloquent letter, but Beattie would understand. Beattie was not a great talker but she was a great understander. He went out to put the three letters into the pillar-box. Then he hurried upstairs to his dressing-room. For the first time in his life he almost dreaded spending an evening alone with Rosamund.

He did not see her till he came into the drawing-room. As he opened the door he saw her sitting by the fire reading, in a dark blue dress.

"I'm afraid I'm late," he said, as he walked to the hearth. "I wrote to mother, Beattie and godfather to tell them what I was going to do."

"What you had done," she said quietly, putting down the book.

"I haven't actually been sworn in yet, but of course it is practically the same thing."

He looked at her almost surreptitiously. She was very grave, but there was absolutely nothing hostile or angry in her expression or manner. They went into the dining-room, and talked together much as usual during dinner. As soon as dinner was over, and the parlour-maid had gone out, having finished her ministrations, which to Dion that night had seemed innumerable and well-nigh unbearable, he said:

"I'm dreadfully sorry about to-day. I did the wrong thing in volunteering without saying anything to you. Of course you were hurt and startled——"

He looked at her and paused.

"Yes, I was. I couldn't help it, and I don't think you ought to have done what you did. But you have made a great sacrifice—very great. I only want to think of that, Dion, of how much you are giving up, and of the cause—our cause."

She spoke very earnestly and sincerely, and her eyes looked serious and very kind.

"Don't let us go back to anything sad, or to any misunderstanding now," she continued. "You are doing an admirable thing, and I shall always be glad you had the will to do it, were able to do it. Tell me everything. I want to live in your new life as much as I can. I want you to feel me in it as much as you can."

"She has prayed over it. While I was writing my letters she was praying over it."

Suddenly Dion knew this as if Rosamund had opened her heart to him and had told it. And immediately something which was like a great light seemed not only to illumine the

present moment but also to throw a piercing ray backwards upon all his past life with Rosamund. In the light of this ray he discerned a shadowy something, which stood between Rosamund and him, keeping them always apart. It was a tremendous Presence ; his feeling was that it was the Presence of God. Abruptly he seemed to be aware that God had always stood, was standing now, between him and his wife. He remembered the words in the marriage service, " Those whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder." " But God," he thought, " did not join us. He stood between us always. He stands between us now." It was an awful thought. It was like a great blasphemy. He was afraid of it. And yet he now felt that it was an old, old thought in his mind which only now had he been able to formulate. He had known without knowing consciously, but now he consciously knew.

He took care at this moment not to look at Rosamund. If he looked, surely she would see in his eyes his terrible thought, the thought he was going to carry with him to South Africa. Making a great effort he began to tell her all that he knew about the C.I.V. They discussed matters in a comradely spirit. Rosamund said many warm-hearted things, showed herself almost eagerly solicitous. They went up to sit by the fire in her little room. Dion smoked. They talked for a long time. Had anyone been there to listen he would probably have thought, " This man has got the ideal wife. She's a true comrade as well as a wife." But all the time Dion kept on saying to himself, " This is the result of her prayers before dinner. She is being good." Only when it was late, past their usual hour for going to bed, did he feel that the strong humanity in Rosamund had definitely gained ground, that she was being genuinely carried away by warm impulses connected with dear England, our men, and with him.

When they got up at last to go to bed she exclaimed :

" I shall always love what you have done, Dion. You know that."

" But not the way of my doing it ! " trembled on his lips.

He did not say it, however. Why lead her back even for a moment to bitterness ?

That night he lay with his thought, and in the darkness the ray was piercing bright and looked keen like a sharpened sword.

## CHAPTER II

ON the fourth of January Dion and about nine hundred other men were sworn in at the Guildhall; on January the seventeenth, eight hundred of them, including Dion, were presented with the Freedom of the City of London; on the nineteenth they were equipped and attended a farewell service at St. Paul's Cathedral, after which they were entertained at supper, some at Gray's Inn and some at Lincoln's Inn; on the twentieth they entrained for Southampton, from which port they sailed in the afternoon for South Africa. Dion was on board of the "Ariosto."

Strangely, perhaps, he was almost glad when the ship cast off and the shores of England faded and presently were lost beyond the horizon line. He was alone now with his duty. Life was suddenly simplified. It was better so. In the last days he had often felt confused, beset, had often felt that he was struggling in a sea of complications which threatened to overwhelm him. There had been too much to do and there had been too much to endure; he had been obliged to be practical when he was feeling intensely emotional. The effort to dominate and to conceal his emotion had sometimes almost exhausted him in the midst of all he had had to do. He had come to the knowledge of the fact that it is the work of the spirit which leaves the whole man tired. He was weary, not from hard energies connected with his new profession, not from getting up at dawn, marching through dense crowds of cheering countrymen, travelling, settling in on shipboard, but from farewells. He looked back now upon a sort of panorama of farewells, of partings from his mother, his uncle, Bruce Evelin, Guy, Beatrice, Robin, Rosamund.

Quite possibly all these human companions had vanished out of his life for ever. It was a tremendous thought, upon which he was resolved not to dwell lest his courage and his energies might be weakened.

Through good-byes a man may come to knowledge, and Dion had, in these last few days, gone down to the bedrock of knowledge concerning some of those few who were intimately in his life—knowledge of them and also of himself. Nobody had travelled to Southampton to see him off. He had a very English horror of scenes, and had said all his good-byes in

private. With Bruce Evelin he had had a long talk; they had spoken frankly together about the future of Rosamund and Robin in the event of his not coming back. Dion had expressed his views on the bringing up of the boy, and, in doing so, had let Bruce Evelin into secrets of Greece. The father did not expect, perhaps did not even desire, that the little son should develop into a paragon, but he did desire for Rosamund's child the strong soul in the strong body, and the soft heart that was not a softy's heart.

In that conversation Bruce Evelin had learnt a great deal about Dion. They had spoken of Rosamund, perhaps more intimately than they had ever spoken before, and Dion had said, "I'm bothering so much about Robin partly because her life is bound up with Robin's."

"Several lives are bound up with that little chap's," Bruce Evelin had said.

And a sudden sense of loneliness had come upon Dion. But he had only made some apparently casual remark to the effect that he knew Bruce Evelin would do his best to see that Robin came to no harm. No absurd and unnecessary promises had been exchanged between the old and the young man. Their talk had been British, often seemingly casual, and nearly always touched with deep feeling. It had not opened to Dion new vistas of Bruce Evelin. For a long time Dion had felt that he knew Bruce Evelin. But it had given him a definite revelation of the strong faithfulness, the tenacity of faithfulness in friendship, which was perhaps the keynote of Bruce Evelin's character.

The parting from Guy had been less eventful. Nevertheless it had helped to get rid of certain faint misunderstandings which neither of the friends had ever acknowledged. Since the Mrs. Clarke episode Dion had been aware that Guy's feeling towards him had slightly changed. They were such old and tried friends that they would always care for each other, but Guy could not help resenting Rosamund's treatment of Mrs. Clarke, could not help considering Dion's acquiescence in it a sign of weakness. These feelings, unexpressed, but understood by Dion, had set up a slight barrier between the two young men; it had fallen when they said good-bye. Mrs. Clarke had been forgotten then by Guy, who had only remembered the gifts of war, and that possibly this was his final sight of old Dion. All their common memories had been with them when the last hand-clasp was given, and perhaps only when their hands fell apart had they thoroughly

tested at last the strength of the link between them. They were friends for life without knowing exactly why. Thousands of Englishmen were in the same case.

Dion had gone to De Lorne Mansions to bid good-bye to Beattie, and with her, too, he had talked about Robin. Beattie had known when Dion was coming, and had taken care to be alone. Always quiet, she had seemed to Dion quieter even than usual in that final hour by the fire, almost singularly timid and repressed. There had even been moments when she had seemed to him cold. But the coldness—if really there had been any—had been in her manner, perhaps in her voice, but had been absent from her face. They had sat in the firelight, which Beattie was always fond of, and Dion had not been able to see her quite clearly. If the electric light had been turned on she might have told him more ; but she surely would not have told him of the quiet indifference which manner and voice and even inexpressive attitude had seemed to be endeavouring to convey to him. For Beattie's only half-revealed face had looked eloquent in the firelight, eloquent of a sympathy and even of a sorrow she had said very little about. Whenever Dion had begun to feel slightly chilled he had looked at her, and the face in the firelight had reassured him. "Beattie does care," he had thought ; and he had realized how much he wanted Beattie to care, how he had come to depend upon Beattie's sisterly affection and gentle but deep interest in all the course of his life.

Quickly, too quickly, the moment had come for him to say the last word to Beattie, and suddenly he had felt shy. It had seemed to him that something in Beattie—he could not have said what—had brought about this unusual sensation in him. He had got up abruptly with a "Well, I suppose I must be off now!" and had thrust out his hand. He had felt that his manner and action were almost awkward and hard. Beattie had got up too in a way that looked listless.

"Are you well, Beattie?" he had asked.

"Quite well."

"Perhaps you are tired?"

"No."

"I fancied—well, good-bye, Beattie."

"Good-bye, Dion."

That had been all. At the door he had looked round, and had seen Beattie standing with her back to him and her face to the firelight, stooping slightly, and he had felt a strong

impulse to go to her again, and to—he hardly knew what—to say good-bye again, perhaps, in a different, more affectionate or more tender way. But he had not done it. Instead he had gone out and had shut the door behind him very quietly. It was odd that Beattie had not even looked after him. Surely people generally did that when a friend was going away, perhaps for ever. But Beattie was different from other people, and somehow he was quite sure she cared.

The three last good-byes had been said to his mother, Robin and Rosamund, in Queen Anne's Mansions and Little Market Street. He had stayed with his mother for nearly two hours. She had a very bad cold, unbecoming, complicated with fits of sneezing, a cold in the "three handkerchiefs an hour" stage. And this commonplace malady had made him feel very tender about her, and oddly pitiful about all humanity, including, of course, himself. While they talked he had thought several times, "It's hard to see mother in such a state when perhaps I shall never see her again. I don't want to remember her with a cold." And the thought, "I shan't be here to see her get well," had pained him acutely.

"I'm looking and feeling glazed, dee-ar," had been her greeting to him. "My nose is shiny and my mind is woolly. I don't think you ought to kiss me or talk to me."

And then he had kissed her, and they had talked, intimately, sincerely. In those last hours mercifully Dion had not felt shy with his mother. But perhaps this was because she was never shy, not even in tenderness or in sorrow. She was not afraid of herself. They had even been able to discuss the possibility of his being killed in the war, and Mrs. Leith had been quite simple about it, laying aside all her usual elaboration of manner.

"The saddest result of such an honourable and noble end would be the loss to Robin, I think," she had said.

"To Robin? But he's got such a mother!"

"Do you think he doesn't need, won't need much more later on, the father he's got? Dion, my son, humility is a virtue, no doubt, but I don't believe in excess even in the practice of virtue, and sometimes I think you do."

"I didn't know it."

"This going to the war is a splendid thing for you. I wouldn't have you out of it even though——"

Here she had been overcome by a tremendous fit of sneezing from which she had emerged with the smiling remark:

"I'm not permitted to improve the occasion."

"I believe I know what you mean. Perhaps you're right, mother. You're cleverer than I am. Still I can't help seeing that Robin's got a mother such as few children have. Look round at all the mothers you know in London!"

"Yes. Rosamund was created to be a mother. But just to-day I want to look at Robin's father."

And so they had talked of him.

That talk had done Dion good. It had set his face towards a shining future. If he came back from the war he now felt, through the feeling of his mother, that he would surely come back tempered, tried, better fitted to Robin's uses, more worthy of any woman's gift of herself. Without preaching, even without being remarkably definite, his mother had made him see in this distant war a great opportunity, not to win a V.C. or any splashing honour that would raise him up in the eyes of the world, but to reach out and grip hold of his own best possibilities. Had his mother done even more than this? Had she set before him some other goal which the war might enable him to gain if he had not already gained it? Had she been very subtle when seeming to be very direct? Even when she held him in her arms—despite the cold!—and gave him the final kiss and blessing, he was not sure. If it had been done it had been done with extraordinary delicacy, with the marvellous cunning of clever love which knows how to avoid all the pitfalls. And it had been done, too, with the marvellous unselfishness of which, perhaps, only the highest type of mother-love is capable.

After he had left his mother, and was just going out of the flat, Dion had heard through the half-open door a sound, a ridiculous sound, which had made him love her terribly, and with the sudden yearning which is the keenest pain of the heart because it defines all the human limitations: she was sneezing again violently. As he shut the front door, "If she were to die while I'm away, and I were to come back!" had stabbed his mind. Outside in the court he had gazed up at the towering rows of lighted windows and had said another good-bye out there.

Shutting his eyes for a moment as the "Ariosto" ploughed her way onwards through a rather malignant sea, Dion saw again those rows of lighted windows, and he wondered, almost as earnestly as a child wonders, whether his mother's cold was better. What he had done, volunteering for active

service and joining the C.I.V. battalion, had made him feel simpler than usual; but he did not know it, did not look on at his own simplicity.

And then, last of all, had come the parting from Robin and Rosamund.

Rosamund and Dion had agreed not to make very much of his departure to Robin. Father was going away for a time, going over the sea picturesquely, with a lot of friends, all men, all happy to be together and to see wonderful things in a country quite different from England. Some day, when Robin was as big as father, perhaps he, too, would make such a voyage with his friends. Robin had been deeply interested, and had shown his usual ardour in comment and—this was more embarrassing—in research. He had wanted to know a great deal about father's intentions and the intentions of father's numerous male friends. What were they going to do when they arrived in the extremely odd country which had taken it into its head to be different from England? How many male friends was father taking with him? Why hadn't they all been to "see us"? Was Uncle Guy one of them? Was Mr. Thrush going too? Why wasn't Mr. Thrush going? If he was too old to go was Uncle Guy too old? Did Mr. Thrush want to go? Was he disappointed at father's not being able to take him? Was it all a holiday for father? Would mummy have liked to go? No lies had been told to Robin, but some of the information he had sought had been withheld. Dion had made skilful use of Mr. Thrush when matters had become difficult, when Robin had nearly driven him into a corner. The ex-chemist, though seldom seen, loomed large in Robin's world, on account of his impressive colouring and ancient respectabilities. Robin regarded him with awful admiration, and looked forward to growing like him in some far distant future. Dion had frequently ridden off from difficult questions on Mr. Thrush. Even in the final interview between father and son Mr. Thrush had been much discussed.

The final interview had taken place in the nursery among Aunt Beattie's bricks, by which Robin was still obsessed. Dion had sat on the floor and built towers with his boy, and had wondered, as he handled the bricks in the shining of the nursery fire, whether he would come back to help Robin with his building later on. He was going out to build, for England and for himself, perhaps for Robin and Rosamund, too. Would he be allowed to see the fruits of his labours?

The tower of bricks had grown high, and with it Dion had built up another tower, unknown to Robin, a tower of hopes for the child. So much ardour in so tiny a frame! It was a revelation of the wonder of life. What a marvel to have helped to create that life and what a responsibility. And he was going away to destroy life, if possible. The grotesque-ness of war had come upon him then, as he had built up the tower with Robin. And he had longed for a released world in which his boy might be allowed to walk as a man. The simplicity of Robin, his complete trustfulness, his eager appreciation of human nature, his constant reaching out after kindness without fear of being denied, seemed to imply a world other than the world which must keep on letting blood in order to get along. Robin, and all the other Robins, female and male, revealed war in its true light. Terrible children whose unconscious comment on life bites deep like an acid! Terrible Robin in that last hour with the bricks!

When the tower had become a marvel such as had been seen in no nursery before, Dion had suggested letting it be. Another brick and it must surely fall. The moment was at hand when he must see the last of Robin. He had had a furtive but strong desire to see the tower he and his son had built still standing slenderly erect when he went out of the nursery. Just then he had been the man who seeks a good omen. Robin had agreed with his suggestion after a long moment of rapt contemplation of the tower.

"I wish Mr. Thush could see it," he had observed, laying down the brick he had taken up to add to the tower just before his father had spoken. "He *would* be pleased."

The words had been lifted out on a sigh, the sigh of the wonder-worker who had achieved his mission. And then they had talked of Mr. Thrush, sitting carefully, almost motionless, beside the tower, and speaking softly "for fear." The firelight had danced upon the yellow bricks and upon the cream-coloured nursery walls, filtering through the high nursery "guard" which protected Robin from annihilation by fire, and the whisper, whisper of their voices had only emphasized the quiet. And, with every moment that went by, the lit-up tower had seemed more like a symbol to Dion. Then at last the cuckoo-clock had chimed and the wooden bird, with trembling tail, had made its jerky obeisance.

"Cuckoo!"

Dion had put his arm round the little figure in the green

jersey and the tiny knickerbockers, and had whispered, still governed by the tower :

" I must go now, Robin."

" Good-bye, Fa," Robin had whispered back, with his eyes on the tower.

With a very careful movement he had lifted his face to be kissed, and on his soft lips Dion had felt a certain remoteness. Did the tower stand between him and his little son as he said good-bye to Robin ?

Just as he had reluctantly let Robin go and, with his legs crossed, had been about to perform the feat of getting up without touching the floor with his hands, and without shaking the bricks in their places,—moved to this trifling bodily feat by the desire to confront his emotion with an adversary,—the door behind him had been opened. Already in movement he had instinctively half-turned round. Something had happened,—he never knew exactly what,—something had escaped from his physical control because his mind had abruptly been deflected from its task of vigilance : there had been a crash and a cry of " Oh, *Fa* ! " from Robin, and he had met Rosamund's eyes as the tower toppled down in ruin. Not so much as one brick had been left upon another.

Robin had been greatly distressed. Tears had come into his eyes, and for a moment he had looked reproachfully at his father. Then, almost immediately, something chivalrous had spoken within him, admonishing him, and he had managed a smile.

" It'll be higher nextime, Fa, won't it ? " he had murmured, still evidently fighting a keen disappointment.

And Dion had caught him up, given him a hug, whispered " My boy ! " to him, put him down and gone straight out of the room with Rosamund, who had not spoken a word.

And that had been the last of Robin for his father.

In the evening, when Robin was asleep, Dion had said good-bye to Rosamund. The catastrophe of the tower of bricks had haunted his mind. As he had chosen to make of the tower an omen, in its destruction he had found a presage of evil which depressed him, which even woke in him ugly fears of the future. He had had a great deal out of life, not all he had wanted, but still a great deal. Perhaps he was not going to have much more. He had not spoken of his fears to Rosamund, but had been resolutely cheerful with her in their last conversation. Neither of them had

mentioned the possibility of his not coming back. They had talked of what probably lay before him in South Africa, and of Robin, and presently Rosamund had said :

"I want to make a suggestion. Will you promise to tell me if you dislike it ?"

"Yes. What is it ?"

"Would you mind if I succeeded in letting this house and went into the country with Robin to wait for your coming back ?"

"Letting it furnished, do you mean ?"

"Yes."

"But won't you be dull in the country, away from mother, and Beattie, and godfather, and all our friends ?"

"I could never be dull with Robin and nature, never and I wouldn't go very far from London. I thought of something near Welsley."

"So that you could go in to Cathedral service when 'The Wilderness' was sung !"

He had smiled as he had said it, but his own reference to Rosamund's once-spoken-of love of the wilderness had, in a flash, brought the hill of Drouva before him, and he had faced man's tragedy—remembered joys of the past in a shadowed present.

"Go into the country, Rose. I only want you to be happy, but"—he had hesitated, and then had added, almost in despite of himself—"but not too happy."

Not too happy ! That really was the great fear at his heart now that he was voyaging towards South Africa, that Rosamund would be too happy without him. He no longer deceived himself. This drastic change in his life had either taught him to face realities, or simply prevented him from being able to do anything else. He told himself the truth, and it was this, that Rosamund did not love him at all as he loved her. She was fond of him, she trusted him, she got on excellently with him, she believed in him, she even admired him for having been able to live as he had lived before their marriage, but she did not passionately love him. He might have been tempted to think that, with all her fine, even splendid, qualities, she was deprived of the power of loving intensely if he had not seen her with Robin, if he had not once spoken with her about her mother.

If he were killed in South Africa would Rosamund be angry at his death ? That was her greatest tribute, anger, directed surely not against any human being, but against

the God Whom she loved and Who, so she believed, ruled the world and directed the ways of men. Once Rosamund had said that she knew it was possible for human beings to hurt God. She had doubtless spoken out of the depths of her personal experience. She had felt sure that by her anger at the death of her mother she had hurt God. Such a conviction showed how she thought of God, in what a closeness of relation with God she felt herself to be. Dion knew now that she had loved her mother, that she loved Robin, as she did not love him. If he were to die she would be very sorry, but she would not be very angry. No, she would be able to breathe out a "χαῖρε!" simply, with a resignation comparable to that of the Greeks on those tombs which she loved; and then—she would concentrate on Robin.

If he, Dion, were to be shot, and had time for a thought before dying, he knew what his thought would be: that the Boer's bullet had only hit a man, not, like so many bullets fired in war, a man and a woman. And that thought would add an exquisite bitterness to the normal bitterness of death.

So Dion, on the "Ariosto," voyaged towards South Africa, companioned by new and definite knowledge—new at any rate in the light and on the surface, definite because in the very big moments of life truth becomes as definite as the bayonet piercing to the man who is pierced.

His comrades were a mixed lot, mostly quite young. The average age was about twenty-five. Among them were barristers, law students, dentists, bank clerks, clerks, men of the Civil Service, architects, auctioneers, engineers, schoolmasters, builders, plumbers, jewellers, tailors, Stock Exchange men, etc. etc. There were representatives of more than a hundred and fifty trades, and adherents to nine religions, among the men of the C.I.V. Their free patriotism welded them together, the thing they had all spontaneously done abolished differences between Baptists and Jews, Methodists and Unitarians, Catholics and Protestants. The perfumery manager and the marine engineer comprehended each the other's language; the dentist and the insurance broker "hit it off together" at first sight; printers and plumbers, pawnbrokers and solicitors, varnish testers and hop factors—they were all friendly and all cheerful together. Each one of them had done a thing which all the rest secretly admired. Respect is a good cement, and can stand a lot of testing. In his comrades Dion was not disappointed.

Among them were a few acquaintances, men whom he had met in the City, but there was only one man whom he could count as a friend, a barrister named Worthington, a bachelor, who belonged to the Greville Club, and who was an intimate of Guy Daventry's. Worthington knew Daventry much better than he knew Dion, but both Dion and he were glad to be together and to exchange impressions in the new life which they had entered so abruptly, moved by a common impulse. Worthington was a dark, sallow, narrow-faced man, wiry, with an eager intellect, fearless and energetic, one of the most cheerful men of the battalion. His company braced Dion.

The second day at sea was disagreeable; the ship rolled considerably, and many officers and men were sea-sick. Dion was well, but Worthington was prostrated, and did not show on deck. Towards evening Dion went down to have a look at him, and found him in his bunk, lead-coloured, with pinched features, but still cheerful and able to laugh at his own misery. They had a small "jaw" together about people and things at home, and in the course of it Worthington mentioned Mrs. Clarke, whom he had several times met at De Lorne Gardens.

"You know she's back again in London?" he said. "The winter's almost impossible at Constantinople because of the winds from the Black Sea."

"Yes, I heard she was in London, but I haven't seen her this winter."

"I half thought—only half—she'd send me a wire to wish me good luck when we embarked," said Worthington, shifting uneasily in his bunk, and twisting his white lips. "But she didn't. She's a fascinating woman. I should have liked to have had a wire from her."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Dion.

"What is it?"

"I've just remembered I got some telegrams when we were going off. I read one, from my wife, and stuffed the others away. There was such a lot to do and think of. I believe they're here."

He thrust a hand into one of his pockets and brought out four telegrams, one, Rosamund's, open, the rest unopened. Worthington lay staring at him and them, glad perhaps to be turned for a moment from self-contemplation by any incident, however trifling.

"I'll bet I know whom they're from," said Dion. "One's

from old Guy, one's from Bruce Evelin, and one's from——" He paused, fingering the telegrams.

"Eh?" said Worthington, still screwing his lips about.

"Perhaps from Beattie, my sister-in-law, unless she and Guy have clubbed together. Well, let's see."

He tore open the first telegram.

"May you have good luck and come back safe and soon.—BEATTIE—GUY."

He opened the second. It was from Bruce Evelin.

"May you be a happy warrior.—BRUCE EVELIN."

Dion read it more than once, and his lip quivered for a second. He shot a glance at Worthington, and said, rather brusquely:

"Beatrice and Guy Daventry and Bruce Evelin!"

Worthington gave a little faint nod in the direction of the telegram that was still unopened.

"Your mater!"

"No; she wrote to me. She hates telegrams, says they're public property. I wonder who it is."

He pushed a forefinger under the envelope, tore it and pulled out the telegram.

"The forgotten do not always forget. May Allah have you and all brave men in His hand.—CYNTHIA CLARKE."

Dion felt Worthington's observant eyes upon him, looked up and met them as the "Ariosto" rolled and creaked in the heavy grey wash of the sea.

"Funny!" he jerked out.

Worthington lifted inquiring eyebrows but evidently hesitated to speak just then.

"It's from Mrs. Clarke."

"Beastly of her!" tipped out Worthington. "What—she say?"

"Just wishes me well."

And Dion stuck the telegram back into the flimsy envelope.

When he looked at it again that night he thought the woman from Stamboul was a very forgiving woman. Almost he wished that she were less forgiving. She made him now, she had made him in days gone by, feel as if he had behaved to her almost badly, like a bit of a brute. Of course that wasn't true. If he hadn't been married no doubt they might have been good friends. As things were, friendship between

them was impossible. He did not long for friendship with Mrs. Clarke. His life was full. There was no room in it for her. But he slightly regretted that he had met her, and he regretted more that she had wished to know Rosamund and him better than Rosamund had wished. He kept her telegram, with the rest of the telegrams he had received on his departure; now and then he looked at it, and wondered whether its wording was not the least bit indelicate. It would surely have been wiser if Mrs. Clarke had omitted the opening six words. They conveyed a reproach; they conveyed, too, a curious suggestion of will power, of quiet persistence. When he read them Dion seemed to feel the touch—or the grip—of Stamboul, listless apparently, yet not easily to be evaded or got rid of.

That telegram caused him to wonder whether he had made a really strong impression upon Mrs. Clarke, such as he had not suspected till now, whether she had not, perhaps, liked him a good deal more than she liked most people. "May Allah have you and all brave men in His hand." Worthington would have been glad to have had that message. Dion had discovered that Worthington was half in love with Mrs. Clarke. He chaffed Dion about Mrs. Clarke's telegram with a rather persistent gaiety which did not hide a faint, semi-humorous jealousy. One day he even said, "To him that hath shall be given. It's so like a woman to send her word of encouragement to the man who's got a wife to encourage him, and to leave the poor beggar who's got no one out in the cold. It's a cruel world, and three-quarters of the cruelty in it is the production of women." He spoke with a smile, and the argument which followed was not serious. They laughed and bantered each other, but Dion understood that Worthington really envied him because Mrs. Clarke had thought of him at the moment of departure. Perhaps he had been rather stupid in letting Worthington know about her telegram. But Worthington had been watching him; he had had a feeling that Worthington had guessed whom the telegram was from. The matter was of no importance. If Mrs. Clarke had cared for him, or if he had cared for her, he would have kept her message secret; as they were merely acquaintances who no longer met each other, her good wishes from a distance meant very little, merely a kindly thought, for which he was grateful and about which no mystery need be made.

Of course he must write a letter of thanks to Mrs. Clarke.

One day, after he had written to Rosamund, to Robin, to

his mother, to Beattie and to Bruce Evelin, Mrs. Clarke's turn came. His letter to her was short and cheery, but he was slow in writing it. There was a noise of men, a turmoil of activity all about him. In the midst of it he heard a husky, very individual voice, he saw a pair of wide-open distressed eyes looking directly at him. And an odd conviction came to him that life would bring Mrs. Clarke and him together again. Then he would come back from South Africa? He had no premonition about that. What he felt as he wrote his letter was simply that somehow, somewhere, Mrs. Clarke and he would get to know each other better than they knew each other now. Kismet! In the vast Turkish cemeteries there were mouldering bodies innumerable. Why did he think of them whenever he thought of Mrs. Clarke? No doubt because she lived in Constantinople, because much of her life was passed in the shadow of the towering cypresses. He had thought of her as a cypress. Did she keep watch over bodies of the dead?

A bugle rang out. He put his letter into the envelope and hastily scribbled the address. Mrs. Clarke was again at Claridge's.

. . . . . .

Every man who loves very deeply wishes to conquer the woman he loves, to conquer the heart of her and to have it as his possession. Dion had left England knowing that he had won Rosamund but had never conquered her. This South African campaign had come upon him like a great blow delivered with intention; a blow which does not stun a man but which wakes the whole man up. If this war had not broken out his life would have gone on as before, harmoniously, comfortably, with the daily work, and the daily exercise, and the daily intercourse with wife and child and friends. And would he ever have absolutely known what he knew now, what—he was certain of it!—his mother knew, what perhaps Beattie and even Bruce Evelin knew?

He had surely failed in a great enterprise, but he was resolved to succeed if long enough life were given to him. He was now awake and walked in full knowledge. Surely, Rosamund being what she was, the issue lay with himself. If God had stood between them that must be because he, Dion, was not yet worthy of the full happiness which was his greatest earthly desire. Dion was certain that God did not stand between Rosamund and Robin.

He had dreams of returning to England a different, or

perhaps a developed, man. The perfect lovers ought to stand together on the same level. Rosamund and he had never done that yet. He resolved to gain in South Africa, to get a grip on his best possibilities, to go back to England, if he ever went back, a bigger soul, freer, more competent, more generous, more fearless. He could never be a mystic. He did not want to be that. But surely he could learn in this interval of separation which, like a river, divided his life from Rosamund's, to match her mysticism with something which would be able to call it out of its mysterious retreat and to stand up in the light with it understood and understanding. Instead of retreating to God alone she might then, perhaps, take him with her; instead of praying over him she might pray with him. If, after he returned from South Africa, Rosamund were ever again to be deliberately good with him, making such an effort as she had made on that horrible evening in Little Market Street when he had told her he was going on active service, he felt that he simply couldn't bear it.

He put firmly aside the natural longings for home which often assailed him, and threw himself heart and soul into his new duties. Already he felt happier, for he was "out" to draw from the present, from the whole of it, all the building material it contained, and was resolute to use all that material in the construction of a palace, a future based on marble, strong, simple, noble, a Parthenon of a future. He would think no more of a fallen tower of bricks. Only the weak man looks to omens, is governed in his mind, and so in his actions, by them. That which he had not known how to win in an easy life he must learn to win in a life that was hard. This war he would take as a gift to him, something to be used finely. If he fell in it still he would have had his gift, the chance to realize some of his latent and best possibilities. He swept out of his mind an old thought, the creeping surmise that perhaps Rosamund had given him all she had to give in lover's love, that she knew how to love as child and as mother, but that she was incapable of being a great lover in man's sense of the term when he applies it to woman.

Madeira was passed on January the twenty-fifth, and the men, staring across the sea, saw its lofty hills rising dreamily out of the haze, watchers of those who would not stop, who had no time for any eating of the lotus. Heat came upon the ship, and there were some who pretended that they heard

sounds, and smelled perfumes wafted, like messages, from the hidden shores on which probably they would never land. Every one was kept busy, after a sail bath, with drilling, musketry instruction, physical drill, cleaning of accoutrements, a dozen things which made the hours go quickly in a buzz of human activities. Some of the men, Dion among them, were trying to learn Dutch under an instructor who knew the mysteries. A call came for volunteers for inoculation, and both Dion and Worthington answered it, with between forty and fifty other men. The prick of the needle was like the touch of a spark; soon after came a mystery of general wretchedness, followed by pains in the loins, a rise of temperature and extreme, in Dion's case even intense, weakness. He lay in his bunk trying to play the detective on himself, to stand outside of his body, saying to himself, "This is I, and I am quite unaffected by my bodily condition." For what seemed to him a long time he was fairly successful in his effort; then the body began to show definitely the power of its weakness upon the Ego, to assert itself by feebleness. His will became like an invalid who is fretful upon the pillows. Soon his strong resolutions, cherished and never to be parted from till out of them the deeds had blossomed, lost blood and fell upon the evil day of anæmia. He had a sensation of going out. When the midnight came he could not sleep, and with it came a thought feeble but persistent: "If she loves me it's because I've given her Robin." And in the creaking darkness, encompassed by the restlessness of the sea, again and again he repeated to himself the words—"it's because I've given her Robin." That was the plain truth. If he was loved, he was loved because of something he had done, not because of something that he was. Towards dawn he felt so weak that his hold on life seemed relaxing, and at last he almost wished to let it go. He understood why dying people do not usually fear death.

Three days later he was quite well and at work, but the memory of his illness stayed with him all through the South African campaign. Often at night he returned to that night on shipboard, and said to himself, "The doctor's needle helped me to think clearly."

The voyage slipped away with the unnoticed swiftness that is the child of monotony. The Southern Cross shone above the ship. When the great heat set in the men were allowed to sleep on deck, and Dion lay all night long under the wheeling stars, and often thought of the stars above

Drouva, and heard Rosamund's voice saying, "I can see the Pleiades."

The ship crossed the line. Early in February the moon began to show a benign face to the crowd of men. One night there was a concert which was followed by boxing. Dion boxed and won his bout easily on points.

This little success had upon him a bracing effect, and gave him a certain prestige among his comrades. He did well also at revolver and musketry practice—better than many men who, though good enough shots at Bisley, found sectional practice with the service rifle a difficult job, were adepts at missing a mark with the revolver, and knew nothing of fire discipline. Because he had set an aim before him on which he knew that his future happiness depended, he was able to put his whole heart into everything he did. In the simplest duty he saw a means to an end which he desired intensely. Everything that lay to hand in the life of the soldier was building material which he must use to the best advantage. He knew fully, for the first time, the joy of work.

On a day in the middle of February the "Ariosto" passed the mail-boat from the Cape bound for England, sighted Table Mountain, and came to anchor between Robben Island and the docks. On the following morning the men of the C.I.V. felt the earth with eager feet as they marched to Green Point Camp.

## CHAPTER III

"ROBIN," said Rosamund, "would you like to go and live in the country?"

Robin looked very serious and, after a moment of silent consideration, remarked:

"Where there's no houses?"

"Some houses, but not nearly so many as here."

Another point presented itself to Robin.

"Would Mr. Thush be there?"

"Well no, I'm afraid he wouldn't."

Robin began to look decidedly adverse to the proposition.

"You see Mr. Thrush has always lived in London," began Rosamund explanatorily.

"But so've we," interrupted Robin.

"But we aren't as old as Mr. Thrush."

"Is he very old, mummie? How old is he?"

"I don't know, but he's a very great deal older than you are."

"I s'poses," observed Robin meditatively, slightly wrinkling his little nose where the freckles were. "Well, mummie?"

"Old people don't generally like to move about much, but I think it would be very good for you and me to go into the country while father's away."

And taking Robin on her knees, and putting her arms round him, Rosamund began to tell him about the country, developing enthusiasm as she talked, bending over the little fair head that was so dear to her—the little fair head which contained Robin's dear little thoughts, funny and very touching, but every one of them dear.

She described to Robin the Spring as it is in the English country, frail and fragrant, washed by showers that come and go with a waywardness that seems very conscious, warmed by sunbeams not fully grown up and therefore not able to do the work of the sunbeams of summer. She told him of the rainbow that is set in the clouds like a promise made from a very great distance, and of the pale and innocent flowers of Spring: primroses, periwinkles, violets, cowslips, flowers of dells in the budding woods, and of clearings round which the trees stand on guard about the safe little daisies and wild hyacinths and wild crocuses; flowers of the sloping meadows that go down to the streams of Spring. And all along the streams the twigs are budding; the yellow "lambs' tails" swing in the breeze, as if answering to the white lambs' tails that are wagging in the fields. The thrush sings in the copse, and in his piercing sweet note is the sound of Spring.

Bending over Robin, Rosamund imitated the note of the thrush, and Robin stared up at her with ardent eyes.

"Does Mr. Thush ever do that?"

"I've never heard him do it."

And she went on talking about the Spring.

How she loved that hour talking of Spring in the country with her human Spring in her arms. What was the war to her just then? Robin abolished war. While she had him there was always the rainbow, the perfect rainbow, rising from the world to the heavens and falling from the heavens to the world. The showers were fleeting Spring showers, and the clouds were fleecy and showed the blue.

"Robin, Robin, Robin!" she breathed over her child, when they had lived in the Spring together, the pure and exquisite Spring.

And Robin, all glowing with the ardour he had caught from her, declared for the country.

A few days later Rosamund wrote to Canon Wilton, who happened to be in residence at Welsley out of his usual time, and asked him if he knew of any pretty small house, with a garden, in the neighbourhood, where she and Robin could settle down till Dion came back from the war. In answer she got a letter from the Canon inviting her to spend a night or two at his house in the Precincts. In a P.S. he wrote:

"If you can come next week I think I can arrange with Mr. Soames, our precentor, for Wesley's 'Wilderness' to be sung at one of the afternoon services; but let me know by return what days you will be here."

Rosamund replied by telegraph. Aunt Beatrice was installed in Little Market Street for a couple of nights as Robin's protector, and Rosamund went down to Welsley, and spent two days with the Canon.

She had never been alone with him before, except now and then for a few minutes, but he was such a sincere and plain-spoken man that she had always felt she genuinely knew him. To every one with whom he spoke he gave himself as he was. This unusual sincerity in Rosamund's eyes was a great attraction. She often said that she could never feel at home with pretence even if the intention behind it was kindly. Perhaps, however, she did not always detect it, although she possessed the great gift of feminine intuition.

She arrived by the express, which reached Welsley Station in the evening, and found Canon Wilton at the station to meet her. His greeting was:

"The 'Wilderness,' Wesley, at the afternoon service to-morrow."

"That's good of you!" she exclaimed, with the warm and radiant cordiality that won her so many friends. "I shall revel in my little visit here. It's an unexpected treat."

The Canon seemed for a moment almost surprised by her buoyant anticipation, and a look that was sad flitted across his face; but she did not notice it.

As they drove in a fly to his house in the Precincts she looked out at the busy provincial life in the narrow streets of the old country town, and enjoyed the intimate concentration of it all.

"I should like to poke about here," she said. "I should feel at home as I never do in London. I believe I'm thoroughly provincial at heart."

In the highest tower of the Cathedral, which stood in the heart of the town, the melodious chimes lifted up their crystalline voices, and "Great John" boomed out the hour in a voice of large authority.

"Seven o'clock," said the Canon. "Dinner is at eight. You'll be all alone with me this evening."

"To-morrow too, I hope," Rosamund said, with a smile.

"No, to-morrow we shall be the awkward number—three. Mr. Robertson, from Liverpool, is coming to stay with me for a few days. He preaches here next Sunday evening."

Rosamund's thought was carried back to a foggy night in London, when she had heard a sermon on egoism, and a quotation she had never forgotten: "*Ego dormio et cor meum vigilat.*"

"Can you manage with two clergymen?" said Canon Wilton.

"I'll try. I don't think they'll frighten me, and I've been wishing to meet Mr. Robertson for a long time."

"He's a good man," said Canon Wilton very simply. But the statement as he made it was like an accolade.

Rosamund enjoyed her quiet evening with the Canon in the house with the high green gate, the elm trees and the grey gables. As they talked, at first in the oak-panelled dining-room later in the Canon's library by a big wood fire, she was always pleasantly conscious of being enclosed, of being closely sheltered in the arms of the Precincts, which held also the mighty Cathedral with its cloisters, its subterranean passages, its ancient tombs, its mysterious courts, its staircases, its towers hidden in the night. The ecclesiastical flavour which she tasted was pleasant to her palate. She loved the nearness of those stones which had been pressed by the knees of pilgrims, of those walls between which so many prayers had been uttered, so many praises had been sung. A cosiness of religion enwrapped her. She had a delicious feeling of safety. They could hear the chimes where they sat encompassed by a silence which was not like ordinary silences, but which to Rosamund seemed impregnated with the peace of long meditations and of communings with the unseen.

"This rests me," she said to her host. "Don't you love your time here?"

"I'm fond of Welsley, but I don't think I should like to

pass all my year in it. I don't believe in sinking down into religion, or into practices connected with it, as a soft old man sinks down into a feather bed. And that's what some people do."

"Do they?" said Rosamund abstractedly.

Just then a large and murmurous sound, apparently from very far off, had begun to steal upon her ears, level and deep, suggestive almost of the vast slumber of a world and of the underthings that are sleepless but keep at a distance.

"Is it the organ?" she asked, in a listening voice.

Canon Wilton nodded.

"Dickinson practising."

They sat in silence for a long time listening. In that silence the Canon was watching Rosamund. He thought how beautiful she was and how good, but he almost disliked the joy which he discerned in her expression, in her complete repose. He rebuked himself for this approach to dislike, but his rebuke was not efficacious. In this enclosed calm of the precincts of Welsley where, pacing within the walls by the edge of the velvety lawns, the watchman would presently cry out the hour Canon Wilton was conscious of a life at a distance, the life of a man he had met first in St. James's Square. The beautiful woman in the chair by the fire had surely forgotten that man.

Presently the distant sound of the organ ceased.

"I love Welsley," said Rosamund, on a little sigh. "I just love it. I should like to live in the Precincts."

That brought them to a discussion of plans in which Dion was talked of with warm affection and admiration by Rosamund; and all the time she was talking, Canon Wilton saw the beautiful woman in the chair listening to the distant organ. He knew of a house that was to be let in the Precincts, but that night he did not mention it. Something prevented him from doing so—something against which he struggled, but which he failed to overcome.

When they separated it was nearly eleven o'clock. As Rosamund took her silver candlestick from the Canon at the foot of the shallow oak staircase she said:

"I've had *such* a happy evening!"

It was a very sweet compliment very sweetly paid. No man could have been quite indifferent to it. Canon Wilton was not. As he looked at Rosamund a voice within him said:

"That's a very dear woman."

It spoke undeniable truth. Yet another voice whispered:

"Oh, if I could change her!"

But that was impossible. The Canon knew that, for he was very sincere with himself; and he realized that the change he wanted to see could only come from within, could never be imposed by him from without upon the mysterious dweller in the Temple of Rosamund.

That night Rosamund undressed very slowly and "pottered about" in her room, doing dreamily unnecessary things. She heard the chimes, and she heard the watchman calling the midnight hour near her window as "Great John" lifted up his voice. In the drawers where her clothes were laid the Canon's housekeeper had put lavender. She smelt it as she listened to the watchman's voice, shutting her eyes. Presently she drew aside curtain and blind and looked out of the window. She saw the outline of part of the great Cathedral with the principal tower, the home of "Great John"; she felt the embracing arms of the Precincts; and when she knelt down to say her prayers she thought:

"Here is a place where I can really pray."

Nuns surely are helped by their convents and monks by the peace of their whitewashed cells.

"It is only in sweet places of retirement that one can pray as one ought to pray," thought Rosamund that night as she lay in bed.

She forgot that the greatest prayer ever offered up was uttered on a cross in the midst of a shrieking crowd.

On the following day she went to the morning service in the Cathedral, and afterwards heard something which filled her with joyful anticipation. Canon Wilton told her there was a house to let in the Precincts.

"I'll take it," said Rosamund at once. "Esmé Darlington has found me a tenant for No. 5, an old friend of his, or rather two old friends, Sir John and Lady Tenby. Where is it?"

He took her to see it.

The house in question had been occupied by the widow of a Dean, who had recently been driven by her health to "relapse upon Bournemouth." It was a small old house with two very large rooms—one the drawing-room, the other a bedroom.

The house stood at right angles to the east end of the Cathedral, from which it was only divided by a strip of turf broken up by fragments of old grey ruins, and edged by an iron railing, and by a paved passage-way, which led through

the Dark Entry from the "Green Court," where the Deanery and Minor Canons' houses were situated, to the pleasaunce immediately around the Cathedral. To the green lawns of this wide pleasaunce the houses of the residentiary Canons gave access. One projecting latticed window of the drawing-room of Mrs. Browning's house, another of the big bedroom above it, and the windows of the kitchen and the servants' quarters looked on to the passage-way and the Cathedral; all the other windows looked into an old garden surrounded by a very high brick wall, a garden of green turf like moss, of elm trees, and, in summer, of gay herbaceous borders, a garden to which the voices of the chimes dropped down, and to which the Cathedral organ sent its message, as if to a place that knew how to keep safely all things that were precious. Even the pure and chill voices of the boy choristers found a way to this hidden garden, in which there were straight and narrow paths, where nuns might have loved to walk unseen of the eyes of men.

The Dean's widow had left behind all her furniture, and was now adorning a Bournemouth hotel, in which her sprightly invalidism and close knowledge of the investments of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and of the habits and customs of the lesser clergy, were greatly appreciated. Some of the furniture did not wholly commend itself to Rosamund. There were certain settees and back-to-backs, certain what-nots and occasional tables, which seemed to stamp the character of the Dean's widow as meretricious. But these could easily be "managed." Rosamund was enchanted with the house, and went from room to room with Canon Wilton radiantly curious, and almost as excited as a joyous schoolgirl.

"I must poke my nose into everything!" she exclaimed.

And she did it, and made the Canon poke his too.

Presently, opening the lattice of the second window in the big, low-ceiled drawing-room, she leaned out to the moist and secluded garden. She was sitting sideways on the window-seat, of which she had just said, "I won't have this dreadful boudoir colour on *my* cushions!" Canon Wilton was standing behind her, and presently heard her sigh gently, and almost voluptuously, as if she prolonged the sigh and did not want to let it go.

"Yes?" he said, with a half-humorous inflection of the voice.

Rosamund looked round gravely.

"Did you say something?"

"Only—yes?—in answer to your sigh."

"Did I? Yes, I must have. I was thinking——"

She hesitated, while he stood looking at her with his strong, steady grey-blue eyes.

"I was thinking of a life I shall never live."

He came up to the window-seat.

"Some of it might have been passed in just such a garden as this within sound of bells."

With a change of voice she added:

"How Robin will love it!"

"The life you will never live?" said the Canon, smiling gravely.

"No, the garden."

"Then you haven't a doubt?"

"Oh no. When I know a thing there's no room in me for hesitation. I shall love being here with Robin as I have never loved anything yet."

The quarter struck in the Cathedral tower.

"Very different from South Africa!" said Canon Wilton.

Rosamund knitted her brows for a moment.

"I wonder whether Dion will come back altered," she said.

"D'you wish him to?"

She got up from the window-seat, put out her hand, and softly pulled the lattice towards her.

"Not in most ways. He's so dear as he is. It would all depend on the alteration."

She latched the window gently, and again looked at the garden through it.

"I may be altered, too, by living here!" she said. "All alone with Robin. I think I shall be."

Canon Wilton made no comment. He was thinking:

"And when the two, altered, come together again, if they ever do, what then?"

He had noticed that Rosamund never seemed to think of Dion's death in South Africa as a possibility. When she spoke of him she assumed his return as a matter of course. Did she never think of death, then? Did she, under the spell of her radiant and splendidly healthy youth, forget all the tragic possibilities? He wondered, but he did not ask.

Mr. Robertson arrived at the Canon's house just in time for the afternoon service—"my Wilderness service," as Rosamund called it. The bells were ringing as he drove

up with his modest luggage, and Rosamund had already gone to the Cathedral and was seated in a stall.

"I should like to have half an hour's quiet meditation in church before the service begins," she had remarked to Canon Wilton. And the Canon had put her in a stall close to where he would presently be sitting, and had then hurried back to meet Father Robertson.

"My Welsley!" was Rosamund's thought as she sat in her stall, quite alone, looking up at the old jewelled glass in the narrow Gothic windows, at the wonderful sombre oak, age-coloured, of the return stalls and canopy beneath which Canon Wilton, as Canon-in-Residence, would soon be sitting at right angles to her, at the distant altar lifted on high and backed by a delicate marble screen, beyond which stretched a further, tranquilly obscure vista of the great church. The sound of the bells ringing far above her head in the grey central tower was heard by her, but only just heard, as we hear the voices of the past murmuring of old memories and of deeds which are almost forgotten. Distant footsteps echoed among the great tombs of stone and of marble, which commemorated the dead who had served God in that place in the grey years gone by. In her nostrils there seemed to be a perfume, like an essence of concentrated prayers sent up among these stone traceries, these pointed arches, these delicate columns, by generations of believers. She felt wrapped in a robe never woven by hands, in a robe that gave warmth to her spirit.

A few people began stealing quietly in through the narrow archway in the great screen which shut out the raised choir from the nave. Only one bell sounded now in the grey tower. A faint noise, like an oncoming sigh, above Rosamund's head heralded the organ's awakening, and was followed by the whisper of its most distant voice, a voice which made her think—she knew not why—of the sea whispering about a oral reef in an isle of the Southern Seas, part of God's world, mysteriously linked to "my Welsley." She shut her eyes, seeking to feel more strongly the sensation of unity. When she opened them she saw, sitting close to her in the return stalls, Father Robertson. His softly glowing eyes were looking at her, and did not turn away immediately. She felt that he knew she was his fellow-guest, and was conscious of a delicious sensation of sympathy, of giving and taking, of cross currents of sympathy between the Father and herself.

"I love this hour—I love all this!" she said to herself

If only little Robin were submerged in the stall beside her !

The feet of the slow procession were heard, and the silver wand of the chief verger shone out of the delicate gloom.

When the anthem was given out Rosamund looked across at Canon Wilton, and her eyes said to him, " Thank you." Then she stood up, folded her hands on the great cushion in front of her, and looked at the grey vistas and at the dim sparkle of the ancient glass in the narrow windows.

" The wilderness and the solitary places . . ."

She had spoken of this to Dion as they looked at Zante together, before little Robin had come, and she had said that if she had committed a great sin she would like to take her sin into the Wilderness, because purification might be found there. And she had meant what she said, had spoken out of her heart sincerely. But now, as she listened to this anthem, she saw a walled-in garden, with green turf like moss, old elm trees and straight narrow paths. Perhaps she had been mistaken when she had spoken of the sin and the Wilderness, perhaps she would find purification with fewer tears and less agony in the cloister, within sound of the bells which called men to the service of God, and of the human voices which sang His praises. Saints had fled into the Wilderness to seek God there, but was He not in the Garden between the sheltering walls, ready there, as in the farthest desert, to receive the submission of the soul, to listen to the cry, " I have sinned " ?

As in Elis the spell of the green wild had been upon Rosamund, so now the spell of these old Precincts was upon her, and spoke to her innermost being, and as in Elis Dion had been woven into her dream of the Wilderness, so now in Welsley Robin was woven into it. But Dion had seemed a forerunner, and little Robin seemed That for which she had long waited, the fulfilment of the root desire of her whole being as applied to human life.

When the service was over and the procession had gone out Rosamund sat very still listening to the organ. She believed that Canon Wilton had given the organist a hint that he would have an attentive hearer, for he was playing one of Bach's greatest preludes and fugues. Father Robertson stayed on in his place. All the rest of the small congregation drifted away through the archway in the rood-screen and down the steps to the nave. The fugue was a glorious, sturdy thing, like a great solid body inhabited by a big, noble, unquestioning

soul—a soul free from hesitations, that knew its way to God and would not be hindered from taking it. A straight course to the predestined end—that was good, that was glorious! The splendid clamour of the organ above her, growing in sonorous force, filled Rosamund with exultation. She longed to open her mouth and sing; the blood came to her cheeks; her eyes shone; she mounted on the waves of sound; she was wound up with the great fugue, and felt herself part of it. The gradual working up thrilled her whole being; she was physically and spiritually seized hold of and carried along towards a great and satisfying end. At last came the trumpet with its sound of triumphant flame, and the roar of the pedals was like the roaring of the sea. Already the end was there, grandly inherent in the music, inevitable, desired by all the voices of the organ. All the powers of the organ thundered towards it, straining to be there.

It came, like something on the top of the world.

"If I were a man that's the way I should like to go to God!" said Rosamund to herself, springing up. "That's the way, in a chariot of fire."

Unconscious of what she was doing she stretched out her hands with a big gesture and opened her lips to let out a breath; then, in the grey silence of the now empty Cathedral, she saw Father Robertson's eyes.

He stepped down from his stall and went out through the archway, and she followed him. On the steps, just beyond the rood-screen, she met a small, determined-looking man with hot cheeks and shining eyes. She guessed at once that he was the organist, went up to him and thanked him enthusiastically.

The organist was the first person she captivated in Welsley, where she was to have so many warm adherents very soon.

Father Robertson went back to Canon Wilton's house while Rosamund talked to the organist, with whom she walked as far as a high wooden gate labelled "Mr. Dickinson."

"You've got a walled garden too!" she remarked, as her companion took off his hat with an "I live here."

The organist looked inquiring. Rosamund laughed.

"How could you know? It's only that I've been visiting a delicious old house, with a walled garden, to-day. It's to let."

"Oh, Mrs. Duncan Browning's!" said Mr. Dickinson. "I—I'm sure I hope you're going to take it."

"I may!" said Rosamund. "Good-bye, and thank you again for your splendid music. It's done me good."

"My dear!" exclaimed Mr. Dickinson, about a minute later, bursting—rather than going—into his wife's small drawing-room, "I've just met the most delightful woman, a goddess to look at, and as charming as a siren brought up to be a saint."

"More epigrams, Henry!" murmured Mrs. Dickinson.

"She's staying with Canon Wilton. She's a thorough musician such as one seldom comes across. There's a chance —I hope it materializes—of her taking——"

"Your tea is nearly cold, Henry."

"Her name is Mrs. Dion Leith. If she really does come here we must be sure to——"

"Scones. Henry?"

Thus urged, Mr. Dickinson's body for the moment took precedence of his soul.

Rosamund knew she was going to like Mr. Robertson as she liked very few people. She felt as if already she was his friend, and when they shook hands in Canon Wilton's drawing-room she cordially told him so, and referred to the Sunday evening when she had heard him preach. The rooks were cawing among the elms in the Canon's garden. She could hear their voices in the treetops while she was speaking. A wind was stirring as the afternoon waned, and there came a patter of rain on the lofty windows. And the voices of the rooks in the windy treetops, the patter of the rain, and the sigh of the wind were delightful to Rosamund, because she was safely within the Precincts, like a bird surrounded by the warmth of its nest.

"I'm coming to live here," she said to Mr. Robertson, as she poured out tea for the two clergymen. "My husband has gone to South Africa with the City Imperial Volunteers. He's in business, so we live in London. But while he's away I mean to stay here."

And eagerly almost as a child, she told him about the house of the Dean's widow, and described to him the garden.

"It's like a convent garden, isn't it?" she asked Canon Wilton, who assented. "That's why I love it. It gives me the feeling of enclosed peace that must be so dear to nuns."

Something in her voice and look as she said this evidently struck Mr. Robertson, and when she presently left the room he said to Canon Wilton:

"If I didn't know that sweet woman had a husband I

should say she was born with the vocation for a religious life. From the first moment I spoke to her, looked at her, I felt that, and the feeling grows upon me. Can't one see her among sisters?"

"I don't wish to," said Canon Wilton bluntly. "Shall we go to my study?"

With the composed gentleness that was characteristic of him Father Robertson assented, and they went downstairs. When they were safely shut up in the big room, guarded by multitudes of soberly bound volumes, Canon Wilton said:

"Robertson, I want to talk to you in confidence about my guest, who, as you say, is a very sweet woman. You could do something for her which I couldn't do. I have none of your impelling gentleness. You know how to stir that which dwells in the inner sanctuary, to start it working for itself; I'm more apt to try to work for it, or at it. Perhaps I can rouse up a sinner and make him think. I've got a good bit of the instinct of the missioner. But my dear guest here isn't a sinner, except as we all are! She's a very good woman who doesn't quite understand. I think perhaps you might help her to understand. She possesses a great love, and she doesn't know quite how to handle it, or even how to value it."

The clock struck seven when they stopped talking.

That evening, after dinner, Canon Wilton asked Rosamund to sing. Almost eagerly she agreed.

"I shall love to sing in the Precincts," she said, as she went to the piano.

Father Robertson, who had been sitting with his back to the piano, moved to the other side of the room. While Rosamund sang he watched her closely. He saw that she was quite unconscious of being watched, and her unconsciousness of herself made him almost love her. Her great talent he appreciated fully, for he was devoted to music; but he appreciated much more the moral qualities she showed in her singing. He was a man who could not forbear from searching for the soul, from following its workings. He had met all sorts and conditions of men, and with few he had not been friends. He had known, knew now, scientists for whose characters and lives he had strong admiration, and who felt positive that the so-called soul of man was merely the product of the brain, resided in the brain, and must cease with the dispersal of the brain at death. He was not able to prove the contrary. That did not trouble him at all. It was not

within the power of anything or of anyone to trouble this man's faith. He did not mind being thought a fool. Indeed, being without conceit, and even very modest, he believed himself to be sometimes very foolish. But he knew he was not a fool in his faith, which transcended forms, and swore instinctively brotherhood with all honest beliefs, and even with all honest disbeliefs. In his gentle, sometimes slightly whimsical way, he was as sincere as Canon Wilton; but whereas the Canon showed the blunt side of sincerity, he usually showed the tender and winning side. He found good in others as easily and as surely as the diviner finds the spring hidden under the hard earth's surface. His hazel twig twisted if there was present only one drop of the holy water.

He discerned many drops in Rosamund. In nothing of her was her enthusiasm for what was noble and clean and sane and beautiful more apparent than in her singing. Her voice and her talent were in service when she sang, in service to the good. Music can be evil, neurotic, decadent and even utterly base. She never touched musical filth, which she recognized as swiftly as dirt on a body or corruption in a soul.

"We must have Bach's 'Heart ever faithful,'" said Canon Wilton strongly, when Rosamund, after much singing, was about to get up from the piano.

Almost joyfully she obeyed his smiling command. When at last she shut the piano she said to Father Robertson:

"That's Dion's—my husband's—best-loved melody."

"I should like to know your husband," said Father Robertson.

"You must, when he comes back."

"You have no idea, I suppose, how long he will be away?"

"No, nor has he."

"Then what are you going to do about Mrs. Browning's house?" said the Canon's bass.

"Oh—well——"

Two lines appeared in her forehead.

"I thought of taking it for six months, and then I can see. My little house in Westminster is let for six months from the first of March." She had turned to Father Robertson: "I'm only afraid——" She paused. She looked almost disturbed.

"What are you afraid of?" asked Canon Wilton.

"I'm afraid of getting too fond of Welsley."

The Canon looked across at Father Robertson on the other side of the fireplace.

. . . . . .

Rosamund went back to Robin and London on the following afternoon. In the morning she took Father Robertson to see Mrs. Browning's house. Canon Wilton was busy. After the morning service in the Cathedral he had to go to a meeting of the Chapter, and later on to a meeting in the City about something connected with education.

"I shall be in bonds till lunch," he said, "unless I burst them, as I'm afraid I sometimes feel inclined to do when people talk at great length on subjects they know nothing about."

"Perhaps Mrs. Leith will kindly take me to see her house and garden," observed Father Robertson.

Rosamund was frankly delighted.

"Bless you for calling them mine!" she said. "That's just what I'm longing to do."

The wind and the rain were still hanging about in a fashion rather undecided. It was a morning of gusts and of showers. The rooks swayed in the elm tops, or flew up under the scudding clouds of a treacherous sky. There was a strong smell of damp earth, and the turf of the wide spreading lawns looked spongy.

"Oh, how English this is!" said Rosamund enthusiastically to the Father as they set forth together. "It's like the smell of the soul of England. I love it. I should like to lie on the grass and feel the rain on my face."

"You know nothing of rheumatism evidently," said Father Robertson, in a voice that was smiling.

"No, but I suppose I should if I gave way to my impulse. And the rooks would be shocked."

"Do you mean the Cathedral dignitaries?"

They were gently gay as they walked along, but very soon Rosamund, in her very human but wholly unconscious way, put her hand on Father Robertson's arm.

"There it is!"

"Your house?"

"Yes. Isn't it sweet? Doesn't it look peacefully old? I should like to grow old like that, calmly, unafraid and unrepining. I knew you'd love it."

He had not said so, but that did not matter.

"There's a dear old caretaker, with only one tooth in

front and such nice grey eyes, who'll let us in. Not an electric bell!"

She gave him a look half confidential, half humorous, and wholly girlish.

"We have to pull it. That's so much nicer!"

She pulled, and the dear old caretaker, a woman in Cathedral black, with the look of a verger's widow all over her, showed the tooth in a smile as she peeped round the door.

"And now the garden!" said Rosamund, in the withdrawn voice of an intense anticipation, half an hour later, when Father Robertson had seen, and been consulted, about everything from kitchen to attic.

She turned round to Mrs. Soper, as the verger's widow —indeed she was that!—was called.

"Shall you mind if we stay a good while in the garden, Mrs. Soper? It's so delightful there. Will it bother you?"

"Most pleased, ma'am! I couldn't wish for anything else. You do hear the chimes most beautiful from there. But it's very damp. That we must allow."

"Are you afraid of the damp, Father?"

"Not a bit."

"I knew you wouldn't be," she said, almost exultantly.

Mrs. Soper took her stand by the drawing-room window, and gazed through the lattice with the deep interest which seems peculiar to provincial towns, and which is seldom manifested in capitals, where the curiosity is rather of the surface than of the very entrails of humanity. She showed the tooth as she stood, but not in a smile. She was far too interested in the lady and the white-haired clergyman to smile.

"I shouldn't wonder but what they're going to be married!" was her feminine thought, as she watched them walking about the garden, and presently pacing up and down one of the narrow paths, to the far-off wall that bordered one end of the Bishop's Palace, and back again to the wall near the Dark Entry. Canon Wilton had not mentioned Rosamund's name to the verger's widow, who had no evil thoughts of bigamy. Presently the chimes sounded in the tower, and Mrs. Soper saw the two visitors pause in their walk to listen. They both looked upwards towards the Cathedral, and on the lady's face there was a rapt expression which was remarked by Mrs. Soper.

"She do look religious," murmured that lady to the

tooth. "She might be a bishop's lady when she a-stands like that."

The chimes died away, the visitors resumed their pacing walk, and Mrs. Soper presently retired to the kitchen, which looked out on the passage-way, to cook herself "a bit of something" for the midday staying of her stomach.

In the garden that morning Rosamund and Father Robertson became friends. Rosamund had never had an Anglican confessor, though she had sometimes wished to confess, not because she was specially conscious of a burden of sin, but rather because she longed to speak to some one of those inmost thoughts which men and women seldom care to discuss with those who are always in their lives. In Father Robertson she had found the exceptional man with whom she would not mind being perfectly frank about matters which were not for Dion, not for Beattie, not for godfather—matters which she could never have hinted at even to Canon Wilton, whose strong sincerity she deeply admired. Had any of her nearest and dearest heard Rosamund's talk with Father Robertson that day, they would have realized, perhaps with astonishment, how strong was the reserve which underlay her forthcoming manner and capacious frankness about the ordinary matters of everyday existence.

"Father, a sermon from you changed my life, I think," she said, when they had paced up and down the path only two or three times; and, without any self-consciousness, she told him of Dion's proposal on that foggy afternoon in London, of her visit to St. Mary's, Welby Street, and of the impression the sermon had made upon her. She described her return home, and the painful sensation which had beset her when she lost herself in the fog—the sensation of desertion, of a horror of loneliness.

"The next day I accepted my husband," she said. "I resolved to take the path of life along which I could walk with another. I decided to share. Do you remember?"

She looked at him gently, earnestly, and he understood the allusion to his sermon.

"Yes, I remember. But," — his question came very gently—"in coming to that decision, were you making a sacrifice?"

"Yes, I was."

And then Rosamund made a confession such as she had never yet made to anyone, though once she had allowed Dion to know a little of what was in her heart. She told

Father Robertson of the something almost imperious within her which had longed for the religious life. He listened to the story of a vocation; and he was able to understand it as certainly Canon Wilton could not have understood it. For Rosamund's creeping hunger had been not for the life of hard work among the poor in religion, not for the dedication of all her energies to the lost and unreclaimed, who are sunk in the mire of the world, but for that peculiar life of the mystic who leaves the court of the outer things for the court of the mysteries, the inner things, who enters into prayer as into a dark shell filled with the vast and unceasing murmur of the voice which is not human.

"I wished to sing in public for a time. Something made me long to use my voice, to express myself in singing noble music, in helping on its message. But I meant to retire while I was still quite young. And always at the back of my mind there was the thought—'then I'll leave the world, I'll give myself up to God.' I longed for the enclosed life of perpetual devotion. I didn't know whether there was any community in our Church which I could join, and in which I could find what I thought I needed. I didn't get so far as that. You see I meant to be a singer at first."

"Yes, I quite understand. And the giving up of this mystical dream was a great sacrifice?"

"Really it was. I had a sort of absolute hunger in me to do eventually what I have told you."

"I understand that hunger," said Father Robertson.

Just then the chimes sounded in the Cathedral, and they stopped on the narrow path to listen, looking up at the great grey tower which held the voices sweet to their souls.

"I understand that hunger," he repeated, when the chimes died away. "It can be fierce as any hunger after a sin. In your case you felt it was not free from egoism, this strong desire?"

"Your sermon made me look into my heart, and I did think that perhaps I was an egoist in my religious feeling, that I was selfishly intent on my own soul, that in my religion, if I did what I longed presently to do, I should be thinking almost solely of myself."

Rather abruptly Father Robertson put a question:

"There was nothing else which drew you towards marriage?"

"I liked and admired Dion very much. I thought him an exceptional sort of man. I knew he cared for me in a beauti-

ful sort of way. That touched me. And "—she slightly hesitated, and a soft flush came to her cheeks—" I felt that he was a good man in a way—I believe, I am almost sure, that very few young men are good in the particular way I mean. Of all the things in Dion that was the one which most strongly called to me."

Father Robertson understood her allusion to physical purity.

" I couldn't have married him but for that," she added.

" If I had known you when you were a girl I believe I should not have expected you to marry," said Father Robertson.

Afterwards, when he had seen Rosamund with Robin, he thought he had been very blind when he had said that.

" You understand me," she said, very simply. " But I knew you would."

" You have given up something. Many people, perhaps most people, would deny that. But I know how difficult it is "—his voice became lower—" to give up retirement, to give up that food which the soul instinctively longs to find, thinks perhaps it only can find, in silence, perpetual meditation, perpetual prayer, in the world that is purged of the insistent clamour of human voices. But "—he straightened himself with a quick movement, and his voice became firmer—" a man may wish to draw near to God in the Wilderness, or in the desert, and may find Him most surely in "—and here he hesitated slightly, almost as a few minutes before Rosamund had hesitated—" in the Liverpool slums. What a blessing it is, what an unspeakable blessing it is, when one has learnt the lesson that God is everywhere. But how difficult it is to learn ! "

They walked together for a long time in the garden, and Rosamund felt strangely at ease, like one who has entered a haven and has found the desired peace. She had given up something, but how much had been given to her ! In the shelter of the grey towers, and within the enclosing walls, she would go again to some of her dreams, while the chimes marked the passing of the quiet hours, and the watchman's voice was lifted up to the stars which looked down on Welsley.

And Robin would be with her.

## CHAPTER IV

A LITTLE more than six months later, when a golden September lay over the land, Rosamund could scarcely believe that she had ever lived out of Welsley. Dion was still in South Africa, in good health and "without a scratch." In his last letter home he had written that he had no idea how long the C.I.V.'s would be kept in South Africa. The war dragged on, and despite the English successes which had followed such bitter defeats no one could say when it would end. There was no immediate reason, therefore, for Rosamund to move back to London.

She dreaded that return. She loved Welsley and could not now imagine herself living anywhere else. Robin, too, was a pronounced, even an enthusiastic, "Welsleyite," and had practically forgotten "old London," as he negligently called the greatest city in the world. They were very happy in Welsley. In fact, the Dean's widow was the only rift in Rosamund's lute, that lute which was so full of sweet and harmonious music.

Rosamund's lease of the house in the Precincts, "Little Cloisters," as it was deliciously named, had been for six months, from the 1st of March till the 1st of September. As Dion was not coming home yet, and as he wrote begging her to live on at Welsley if she preferred it to London, she was anxious to "renew" for another six months. The question whether Mrs. Duncan Browning would, or would not, renew really tormented Rosamund, and the uncertainty in which she was living, and the misery it caused her, showed her how much of her heart had been given to Welsley.

The Dean's widow was capricious and swayed by fluctuations of health. She was "up and down," whatever that betokened. At one moment she "saw the sun,"—her poetical way of expressing that she began to feel pretty well,—and thought she had had enough of the "frivolous existence one leads in an hotel"; at another a fit of sneezing,—"not the early morning sneeze but the real thing,"—a pang of rheumatism, or a touch of bronchitis, made her fear for the damp of Welsley. She would and she would not, and Rosamund could not induce her to come to a decision, and suffered agonies at the thought of being turned out of Little Cloisters. When Dion came back, of course, a flitting from Welsley

would have to be faced, but to be driven away without that imperative reason would indeed be gall and wormwood. There were days when Rosamund felt unchristian towards Mrs. Dean, upon whom she had never looked, but with whom she had exchanged a great many cordial letters.

In August, under the influence of a "heavy cold, which seems the worse because of the heat," Mrs. Browning had agreed to let Rosamund stay on for another month, September; and now Rosamund was anxiously awaiting a reply to her almost impassioned appeal for a six months' extension of her lease. Canon Wilton was again in residence in the Precincts, and one afternoon he called at Little Cloisters, after the three o'clock service, to inquire what was the result of this appeal. Beatrice was staying with her sister for a few days, and when the Canon was shown in she was alone in the drawing-room, having just come up from the garden, where she had been playing with Robin, whose chirping high voice was audible, floating up from below.

"Is your sister busy?" asked the Canon, after greeting Beatrice.

Beatrice smiled faintly.

"She's in her den. What do you think she is doing?"

The Canon looked hard at her, and he too smiled.

"Not writing again to Mrs. Browning?"

Beatrice nodded, and sat gently down on the window-seat.

"Begging and praying for an extension."

"I've never seen anyone so in love with a place as your sister is with Welsley."

He sat down near Beatrice.

"But it is attractive, isn't it?" she said.

She turned her head slowly and looked out of the open window to the enclosed garden which was bathed in mellow sunshine. The sky above the grey Cathedral towers was a clear and delicate, not deep, blue. Above the mossy red wall of the garden appeared the ruined arches of the cloisters which gave to the house its name. Among them some doves were cooing. Up in the blue, about the pinnacles of the towers, the rooks were busily flying. Robin, in a little loose shirt, green knickerbockers, and a tiny soft white hat set well on the back of his head, was gardening just below the window with the intensity that belongs to the dawn. His bare brown legs moved rapidly, as he ran from place to place, carrying earth, a plant, a bright red watering-pot.

The gardener, a large young man, with whom Robin was evidently on the most friendly, and even intimate, terms, was working with him, and apparently under his close and constant supervision. A thrush with very bright eyes looked on from an adjacent elder bush. Upon the wall, near the end of the Bishop's Palace, a black cat was sunning itself and lazily attending to its toilet.

"It's the very place for Rosamund," said Beatrice, after a pause, during which she drank in Welsley. "She seems to know and love every stick and stone in it."

"And almost every man, woman and child," said the Canon. "She began by captivating the Precincts,—not such an easy task either, for a bishop usually has not the taste of a dean, and minor canons think very lightly of the praises of an archdeacon,—and she has ended by captivating the whole city. Even the wives of the clergy sing her praises with one accord. It's the greatest triumph in the history of the church."

"You see she likes them and is thoroughly interested in all their little affairs."

"Yes, it's genuine sympathy. She makes Welsley her world, and so Welsley thinks the world of her."

He looked across at Beatrice for a moment meditatively, and then said:

"And when her husband comes back?"

"Dion! Well, then, of course——"

She hesitated, and in the silence the drawing-room door opened and Rosamund came in, holding an open letter in her hand, knitting her brows, and looking very grave and intense. She greeted the Canon with her usual warm cordiality, but still looked grave and preoccupied.

"I've been writing to Mrs. Browning about this house," she said earnestly. "It *is* damp, isn't it?"

"Damp?" said the Canon. "I've never noticed it. But then do you think the house is unwholesome?"

"Not for *us*. What I feel is that for a bronchial person it might be."

She paused, looking at her letter.

"I've put just what I feel here, in a letter to Mrs. Browning. I know the house is considered damp; by the Precincts, I mean. Mrs. Murry told me so, and Mrs. Tiling-Smith thinks the same. Even the Bishop—why are you smiling, Canon Wilton?"

But she began to smile too.

"What does the Bishop say about the danger to health of Little Cloisters?"

Her lips twitched, but she replied with firm sweetness:

"The Bishop says that all, or nearly all, old houses are apt to be damp in winter."

"A weighty utterance! But I'm afraid Mrs. Browning —by the way, have you put the Bishop into your letter?"

"I had thought of reading it to you both, but now I shall not."

She put the letter into an envelope, sealed it up with practical swiftness, rang the bell for Annie and sent it to the post-box round the corner.

"I did put the Bishop in," she added, with a mockery of defiance that was almost girlish, when Annie had gone out.

"That was a mistake," said the Canon sonorously.

"Why?"

"Bishops never carry weight with the wives, or widows, of deans."

"But why not?" asked Rosamund, with a touch of real anxiety.

"Because the wives of deans always think their husbands ought to be bishops instead of those who are bishops, and the widows of deans always consider that they ought to be the widows of bishops. They therefore very naturally feel that bishops are not entitled by merit to the positions they hold, and should be treated with a delicate disdain."

"I never thought of that. I wonder if Annie——"

"Too late!" said the Canon. "You'll have to turn out of Little Cloisters, I foresee that."

Rosamund sat down, leaned towards him with her hands clasped lightly together, and, in her absolutely unself-conscious way, began to tell him and Beattie what she felt about Welsley, or something of what she felt. A good deal she could only have told to Father Robertson. When she had finished, Canon Wilton said, in his rather abrupt and blunt way:

"Well, but if your husband comes home unexpectedly? You can't stay here then, can you?"

Beatrice, who was still on the window seat, leaned out, and began to speak to Robin below her in a quiet voice which could scarcely be heard within the room.

"But Dion sees no prospect of coming home yet."

"I heard to-day from some one in London that the C.I.V. may be back before Christmas."

"Dion doesn't say so."

"It mayn't be true."

"Dion writes that no one out there has any idea when the war will end."

"Probably not. But the C.I.V. mayn't be needed all through the war. Most of them are busy men who've given up a great deal out of sheer patriotism. Fine fellows! They've done admirable work, and the War Office may decide that they've done enough. Things out there have taken a great turn since Roberts and Kitchener went out. The C.I.V. may come marching home long before peace is declared."

He spoke with a certain pressure, a certain intensity, and his eyes never left Rosamund's face.

"I'm glad my Dion's one of them," she said. "And Robin will be glad, too, some day."

She said nothing more about Mrs. Browning and Little Cloisters. But when Canon Wilton had gone she said to her sister:

"Beattie, does it ever strike you that Canon Wilton's rather abrupt and unexpected sometimes in what he says?"

"He doesn't beat about the bush," replied Beatrice. "Do you mean that?"

"Perhaps I do. Now I'm going down to Robin. How strong he's getting here! Hark at his voice! Can't you hear even in his voice how much good Welsley has done him?"

Robin's determined treble was audible as he piped out:

"Oh no, Fipper! not by the Bish's wall! Why, I say, the slugs always comes there. They do, weally! You come and see! Come quick! I'll show——"

The voice faded in the direction of the Palace.

"I must go down and see if it's true about the slugs," exclaimed Rosamund.

And with beaming eyes she hastened out of the room.

Beatrice looked after her and sighed. Dion's last letter from South Africa was lying on the writing-table close to her. Rosamund had already given it to her to read. Now she took it up and read it carefully again. The doves cooed in the cloisters; the bells chimed in the tower; the mellow sunshine—already the sunshine not of full summer, but of the dawning autumn, with its golden presage of days not golden, and of nights heavy with dews and laden with floating leaves, —came in through the lattice, and lay over her soft and

wistful melancholy, as she read of hardship, and dust, and blood and death, told truthfully, but always cheerfully, as a soldier tells a thing to a woman he loves and wishes to be sincere with.

Dion was not in the peace. Dear Rosamund! Did she quite realize? And then Beattie pulled herself up. A disloyal thought surely leaves a stain on the mind through which it passes. Beattie did not want to have a stain on her mind. She cared for it as a delicately refined woman cares for her body, bathing it every day.

She put Dion's letter down.

That evening Rosamund sang at a charity concert in the City Hall. Her music was already a legend in Welsley and the neighbourhood. Mr. Dickinson, who always accompanied her singing, declared it emphatically to be "great." The wife of the Bishop, Mrs. Mabberley, pronounced the verdict, "She sings with her soul rather than with her voice," without intention of paying a left-handed compliment. The Cathedral choir boys affirmed that "our altos are a couple of squeaks beside her." Even Mrs. Dickinson, "the cold douche," as she was named in the Precincts, had long ago "come round" about Mrs. Dion Leith, and had been heard to say of her, "She's got more than a contralto, she's got a heart, and I couldn't say that of some women in high positions." This was "aimed" at the Dean's wife, Mrs. Japer, who gave herself musical airs, and sometimes tried to "interfere with the Precentor's arrangements," which meant falling foul of "Henry."

As Rosamund looked down upon the rows of friendly and familiar faces from the platform, as she heard the prolonged applause which greeted her before she sang, and the cries of "Encore!" which saluted her when she finished, she felt that she had given her heart irrevocably to Welsley, and the thought came to her, "How can I leave it?" This was cosy, and London could never be cosy. She could identify herself with the concentrated life here, without feeling it a burden upon her. For she was so much beloved that people even respected her privacy, and fell in with what she called "my absurd little ways." In London, however many people you knew, you saw strangers all the time, strangers with hard, indifferent eyes and buttoned-up mouths. And one could never say of London "my London."

When the concert was over she wound a veil about her pale yellow hair, wrapped a thin cloak round her shoulders,

took up her music case and asked for Beattie. An eager boy with a smiling round face, one of the Cathedral choristers, darted off to find Mrs. Daventry, the sister of "our Mrs. Leith"; Mr. Dickinson gently, but decisively, took the music case from Rosamund's hand with an "I'll carry that home for you"; a thin man, like an early primrose obliged by some inadvertence of spring to work for its living, sidled up and begged for the name of "your most beautiful and chaste second encore for our local paper, the "Welsley Whisperer"; and Mrs. Dickinson in a pearl grey shawl, with an artificial pink camellia carelessly entangled in her marvellously smooth mouse-coloured hair, appeared to tell Mrs. Leith authoritatively that "Madame Patey *in her heyday* never sang 'O Rest in the Lord' as we have heard it sung to-night."

Then Rosamund, pleasantly surrounded by dear provincial enthusiasts, made her way to the door where Beattie, with more enthusiasts, was waiting for her; and they all came out into the narrow High Street, and found the September moon riding above their heads to give them a greeting nobly serene and beneficent, and they set out *sans façon*, many of them bareheaded, to walk home down tiny "Archbishop's Lane" to the Precincts.

Rosamund walked with Mr. Dickinson on one side of her and the Dean of Welsley and Mrs. Japer on the other; Canon Wilton, Beattie, the Archdeacon of Welsley and the Precentor were just in front; behind peacefully streamed minor canons and their wives, young sons and daughters of the Precincts, and various privileged persons who, though not of the hierarchy, possessed small houses within the sacred pale. Only the Bishop and his consort drove majestically home in "Harrington's Fly."

What a chatter of voices there was under the projecting eaves of the dear old houses! What happy laughter was wafted towards the smiling moon! Mrs. Dickinson, presently "coming up with" Rosamund's party, became absolutely "waggish" (the Dean's expression), and made Rosamund laugh with that almost helpless spontaneity which is the greatest compliment to a joke. And then the gate in the ancient archway was opened, and they all passed into their great pleasaunce, and, with a sensation of joyous proprietorship, heard the gate shut and locked behind them, and saw the Cathedral lifting its towers to the moon. Laughter was hushed then, and some of the voices were silent; feet went more slowly along the edges of the velvety lawns; the spell of ancient

things which are noble, and which tell of the noble ideals of humanity, fell upon them; their hearts within them were lifted up.

When the Dean bade good-night to Rosamund he said:

"Your music and you mean a great deal to Welsley."

"Not half as much as Welsley means to me," she replied, with earnest sincerity.

"We are all looking forward to greeting your gallant, self-sacrificing husband presently, very soon I hope. Good-night to you. It has been"—he paused, looked at Rosamund and gently pressed her hand,—"a most fragrant evening."

A most fragrant evening! When Beattie and Rosamund had eaten their sandwiches, and drunk their still lemonade and claret, and when Beattie had gone to bed, Rosamund slipped out alone into the dear walled garden, and paced up and down in the moonlight.

Yes, there was something fragrant here, something that infected the soul, something of old faiths and old holy aspirations, a murmur and a perfume of trust and love. There might be gossip, trickling jealousies in this little world, mean actions, even, perhaps, ugly desires and ugly fulfilments of desire. Rosamund scarcely noticed, or did not notice, these things. With her people were at their best. That night, when Beattie was going to bed, Rosamund had said to her:

"I can't think why Mrs. Dickinson is called 'the cold douche.' I find her so warm-hearted and so amusing!"

And so it was with them all. Rosamund had the magic touch which drew the best out of every one in Welsley, because she was happy there, and sincerely loved the place.

"How can I leave Welsley?" she thought now, as she walked up and down in the garden, and heard presently the chiming of midnight and the voice of the watchman beyond the Dark Entry. God seemed very near to her in Welsley, God and the happiness of God. In Welsley she felt, or was beginning to feel, that she was almost able to combine two lives, the life she had grasped and the life she had let go. Here she was a mother and at moments she was almost a religious too. She played with her boy, she trained him, watched over his small body and his increasing soul; and she meditated between the enclosing walls, listened to bells and floating praises, to the Dresden Amen, and to the organ with its many voices all dedicated to the service of God. Often, when she walked alone in the garden, or sat alone in some

hidden corner under the mossy walls, she felt like a nun who had given up the world for ever, and had found the true life in God. In imagination, then, she lived the life of which she had dreamed as a girl before any man had brought her his love.

She could never, even in imagination, live that life truly, without effort, in London. Welsley had made her almost hate London. She did not know how she would be able to bear the return to it. Yet, if Canon Wilton were right in what he had said to her that afternoon, Dion might come back very soon, and therefore very soon she might have to leave Welsley.

No. 5 Little Market Street once more; vaporous Westminster leaning to the dark river!

Rosamund sighed deeply as she looked up again to the towers, and the moon, and turned to go into Little Cloisters. It was difficult to shut out such a night; it would be more difficult to give up the long meditations, the dreams that came in this sweet retirement sheltered by the house of God.

. . . . . .

Two days later, at breakfast-time, Rosamund received the following letter, written on paper scented with "Wood violet":

"HOTEL PALACE-BY-THE-SEA, BOURNEMOUTH,
*Thursday*

"MY DEAR MRS. LEITH,—I have received your two—or is it three?—charming letters recently written, suggesting a renewal of the lease of Little Cloisters beyond September. At first I hesitated. The atmosphere of a Cathedral town naturally attracts me and recalls sweet memories of the past. On the other hand the life of a well-managed hotel, such as this, is not without its *agréments*. Frivolous it may be (though not light); comfortable and restful it undoubtedly is. The against and the for in a nutshell as it were! Your last letter, in which you dwell on the dampness inevitable in old houses, and quote the Bishop's opinion, would, I think, have left me undisturbed in mind—I have recently taken up the 'new mind' cult, which is, of course, not antagonistic to our cherished Anglican beliefs—had it not happened to coincide with more than a touch of bronchial asthma. The Bishop (quite between you and me!) though a very dear man and a very good Christian, is not a person of great intellect. My husband would never enter into controversy with him, as he said it was useless to strive in argument with a mind not

sure of its bearings! An opinion of the Bishop's would not, therefore, weigh much with me. But there is an element of truth in the contention as to the damp. Old houses *are* damp at times. Little Cloisters, placed as it is in the shadow of the Cathedral, doubtless suffers in some degree from this defect. My doctor here,—*such* a clever man!—though very reluctant to prevent me from returning home, confessed today that he thought my case needed careful watching by some one who *knew*. Now (between you and me), nobody *knows* in Welsley, and therefore, after weighing pros and cons, and undergoing an hour of mental treatment—merely the silent encouragement and purification of the will—by an expert here, I have decided to remain for the winter. I am willing, therefore, to extend your lease for another six months on the terms as before. Perhaps you will kindly visit my solicitor, Mr. Collingwood of Cattle Market Lane,—but you are sure to know his address!—who will arrange everything legally with you.—With my kindest regards and all good wishes, believe me, dear Mrs. Leith, always sincerely yours,

"IMOGEN DUNCAN BROWNING"

It was Beattie's last morning at Little Cloisters; she had settled to go back to De Lorne Gardens in the afternoon of that day. Rosamund read Mrs. Browning's letter sitting opposite to her sister at the breakfast-table in the small, panelled dining-room. At the same time Beattie was reading a letter from Guy. As she finished it she looked up and said:

"Anything interesting?"

"What does Guy say?" replied Rosamund. "Oh, here's a letter from godfather! Perhaps to say he's coming down."

Rather hastily she tore open another envelope.

Later on in the morning, when Beattie was doing mysterious things in the garden with Robin, Rosamund slipped out alone and made her way to Cattle Market Lane. She came back just before lunch, looking unusually preoccupied.

The day after Beattie had returned to London, a note from Rosamund told her that the lease of Little Cloisters had been renewed for another six months, till the end of March 1901.

"And if old Dion comes back in the meanwhile, as I fully expect he will?" said Guy, when Beattie told him of Rosamund's note.

"I suppose it is possible to sublet a house," said Beattie, looking unusually inexpressive, Guy thought.

"They say at the Clubs the C.I.V. will be back before Christmas, Beattie," said Guy.

"The Tenbys' lease of Number 5 is up."

"Yes, but do you think Dion can afford to run two houses?"

"Perhaps——" she stopped.

"I don't believe Rosamund will ever be got out of Welsley," said Guy. "And I'm pretty sure you agree with me."

"I must go now," said Beattie gently. "I'm going to Queen Anne's Mansions to tell the dear mother all about my visit to Welsley."

"When is she going there?"

"I don't know. She's very lazy about moving. She's not been out of London since Dion sailed."

"I think she's the most delicate mother-in-law—I don't mean physically—who has ever been born into the world."

Beattie looked down, and in a moment went out of the room without saying anything more.

"Darling Beattie," murmured Guy, looking after his wife. "How she bears her great disappointment."

For Beattie's sake far more than for his own he longed to have a child in his home, a child of hers and his. But that would never be. And so Beattie gave all the mother-love that was in her to Robin, but much of it secretly. Guy knew that, and believed he knew the secret of her reticence even with Robin. She loved Robin, as it were, from a little distance; only his mother must love him cheek to cheek, lips to lips, heart to heart, and his father as men love the sons they think of as the bravery and strength of the future.

But even Guy did not know how much his wife loved Robin, how many buried hopes and dreams stirred in their graves when Robin threw himself impulsively into her arms and confidentially hung on her neck and informed her of the many important details of his life. No man knows all that a certain type of woman is able to feel about a child.

When Rosamund had arranged about the renewal of the lease, she tried to feel the joy which was evidently felt by all her Welsley friends—with one exception which, however, she either did not notice or did not seem to notice. They were frankly delighted and enthusiastic at the prospect of keeping her among them. She was very grateful for their affection,

so eagerly shown, but somehow, although she had signed her name in a solicitor's office, and her signature had been witnessed by a neat young man with a neat bald head, she did not feel quite at ease. She found herself looking at "my Welsley" with the anxiously loving eyes of one who gathers in dear details before it is too late for such garnering; she sat in the garden and listened to the beloved sounds from the Cathedral with strained attention, like one who sets memory at its mysterious task.

The Dean's widow had yielded to the suggestion of inevitable dampness in old houses, but——!

On September 28, towards evening, when Rosamund was in the garden with Robin, Annie, the parlour-maid, came out holding a salver on which lay a telegram. Rosamund opened it and read:

"Coming home.—DION."

"Any answer, ma'am?"

. . . . . .

"Is there any answer, ma'am? Shall I tell the boy to wait?"

"What did you say, Annie?"

"Shall I tell the boy to wait, ma'am?"

"No, thank you, Annie. There's no answer."

Annie turned and recrossed the garden, looking careful, as if she were thinking of her cap, round which the airs were blowing.

Rosamund sat for a few minutes almost motionless, with the slip of paper lying in her lap; then the breeze came lightly, as if curious, and blew it away. Robin saw it and ran.

"I'll catch it, mummie. You see! I'll catch it!"

The little brown legs were amazingly swift, but the telegram was elusive because the breeze was naughty. When Robin ran up to his mother holding it out he was almost breathless.

"Here it is, mummie."

His blue eyes and his voice held triumph.

"I said I would, and I did!"

Rosamund put her arm round him.

"Who do you think sent this?"

"I dunno."

"Daddy sent it."

Robin's eyes became round.

"Daddy! What for?"

"To tell us he's coming home."
A deeply serious expression came to Robin's face.
"Have I growed much?"
"Yes, a great deal."
"Will daddy see it?"
"Yes, I'm sure he will directly he comes."
Robin seemed relieved.
"Is daddy coming here?"
"Yes."
"Is he goin' to live here with us?"
"We shall see about all that when he comes."

Annie, evidently still thinking about her cap, reappeared on the garden path.

"The Dean to see you, ma'am."

Rosamund got up, gave Robin a long kiss on the freckles and said:

"Robin, I believe the Dean has come about Mr. Thrush."

"Does he know Mr. Thush?"

"Not yet. I'll tell you something presently."

And she went slowly into the house. Was a scheme of hers coming to fruition just when——? She tried to close her mind to an approaching thought.

## CHAPTER V

ON the 7th of October the C.I.V. sailed from South Africa for England; on the 19th of October they made St. Vincent; on the 23rd Dion again looked over the sea at the dreaming hills of Madeira. The sight of these hills made him realize the change brought about in him by the work he had done in South Africa. As he gazed at them he suddenly and sharply remembered the man who had gazed at them nine months before, a man who was gathering together determination, who was silently making preparations for progress, or for what he thought of as progress. Those hills then had seemed to be calling to him out of the mists of heat, and to himself he had seemed to be defying them, to be thrusting their voices from him. For were they not the hills of a land where the lotus bloomed, where a weariness bred of stagnant delights wrapped men in a garment

of Nessus, steeped in a subtle poison which drew from them all their energies, which brought them not pain but an inertia more deadly to the soul than pain ? Now they had no power over him. He did not need to defy them, because he had gained in strength. Ere they vanished from his eyes over the sea he remembered another Island rising out of waters that gleamed with gold. How far off now seemed to him that evening when he had looked on it as he travelled to Greece ! How much he had left behind on the way of his life !

The experience of separation and of war had not aged him, but it had made him feel older. Nothing of the boy was left in him. He felt himself of manhood all compact. He had seen men die, had seen how they were able to die, how they met severe physical suffering ; he had silently tried to prepare himself for death, keeping a cheerful countenance ; he had known, like most brave men, the cold companionship of fear, and he had got rid of that companionship. Knowing death better, he knew life much better than when he had left England.

On the voyage out he had looked at the hills of Madeira with Worthington. Now Worthington was not with him ; he had died of enteric at Pretoria in September. Dion was carrying back to England Worthington's last written message to his people. He was carrying also another letter written by an English officer, whose body lay in the earth of Africa, to a woman at home. On the voyage Dion often thought of that dead man and of the living woman to whom he would presently give the letter. He had promised to deliver it personally.

At St. Vincent he had received a welcome by cable from Rosamund, and had sent a cable to her asking not to be met. He wished to meet her in her home at Welsley. She had written to him enthusiastic accounts of its peace and beauty. Her pen had been tipped with love of it. Their first meeting, their reunion, must take place there in the midst of that wonderful peace of green England which she loved so much. After the heat and the dust and the pain of South Africa that would surely be very good.

Their reunion !

Dion had escaped death. He had been allowed to return to Rosamund in splendid health, without a wound, though he had been in battle. He had a strong presentiment that he was allowed to return for some definite purpose. Could he not now be of far more use to his little son than if he had never

volunteered for active service ? Rosamund and he had looked up together at the columns of the Parthenon and had thought of the child who might come. Dion felt that he understood the Parthenon better now that he had looked death in the face, now that he had been ready to give up his life if it had been required of him. He even had a whimsical feeling—he smiled at it seriously to himself—that the Parthenon, if he again stood before it, would understand him better. He was not proud of himself for what he had done. But in the depths of him he often felt earnestly glad, almost thankful, that he had been able to do it. The doing of it had brought a new zest into life, new meanings, a new outlook. He seemed to feel life like something precious in his hand now ; he had not felt it so before, even when he had won Rosamund and had been with her in Greece.

. . . . . .

The hills of Madeira faded. Three days later there was a burial at sea in the early morning. A private, who had been ill with enteric, had died in the night. The body sank into the depths, the ship went on her way and ran into a stiff gale. Already England was rousing herself to welcome her returning sons, brusquely but lustily, in her way, which was not South Africa's way. Dion loved that gale though it kept him awake all night.

Next morning they were off the Start, and heard the voices of the sirens bidding them good day.

. . . . . .

On the last day of October, at about four o'clock in the afternoon, Rosamund was waiting for Dion. He was due by the express which, when up to time, reached Welsley Station at 3.55. She would naturally have been at the station to meet him if she had not received a telegram from him begging her to stay at home.

" Would much rather meet you first in Little Cloisters,—Dion," were the last words of the telegram.

So Rosamund had stayed at home.

It was a peculiarly still autumn afternoon. A suggestion —it was scarcely more than that—of mist made the Precincts look delicately sad, but not to the eyes of Rosamund. She delighted in this season of tawny colours and of fluttering leaves, of nature's wide-eyed and contemplative muteness. The beauty of autumn appealed to her because she possessed a happy spirit, and was not too imaginative. She had imagination, but it was not of the intensely sensitive and

poetic kind which dies with the dying leaves, and in the mists loses all the hopes that were born with the birth of summer. The strong sanity which marked her, and which had always kept her in central paths, far away from the byways in which the neurotic, the decadent, the searchers after the so-called "new" things loved to tread, led her to welcome each season in its turn, and to rejoice in its special characteristics.

So she loved the cloistral feeling autumn brought with it to Welsley. Green summer seemed to open the doors, and one rejoiced in a golden freedom; tawny autumn seemed softly to close the doors, and one was happy in a sensation of being tenderly guarded, of being kept very safe in charge for the coming winter with its fires, and its cosy joys of the interior.

Another reason which made Rosamund care very much for the autumn was this: in the autumn the religious atmosphere which hung about the Precincts of Welsley seemed to her to become more definite, more touching; the ancient things more living and powerful in their message.

"Welsley always sends out influences," she had once said to Father Robertson. "But in certain autumn days it speaks. I hear its voice in the autumn."

She heard its voice now as she waited for Dion.

The lattice window which gave on to the garden was partly open; there was a fire in the wide, old-fashioned grate; vases holding chrysanthemums stood on the high wooden mantelpiece and on the writing-table; the low tea-table had been placed by Annie near the hearth.

Rosamund listened to the cloistral silence, and looked at two deep, old-fashioned arm-chairs which were drawn up by the tea-table.

Just how much had she missed Dion?

That question had suddenly sprung up in her mind as she looked at the two arm-chairs.

The first time she had been in Little Cloisters she had spoken to Canon Wilton of Dion, had wondered if he would come back from South Africa altered; and she had said that if she came to live in it Welsley might alter her. Canon Wilton had made no comment on her remark. She had scarcely noticed that at the time, perhaps had not consciously noticed it; but her subconscious mind had recorded the fact, and she recalled it now.

Welsley, she thought, had changed her a good deal. She was not a self-conscious woman as a rule, but to-day was not

like other days, and she was not quite like herself on other days. Perhaps, for once, she was what women often call "strung up"; certainly she felt peculiarly alive—alive specially in the nerves of her body.

Those two arm-chairs were talking to her; they were telling her of the imminent renewal of the life closely companioned, watched over, protected, beloved. They were telling, and they were asking, too. She felt absurdly that it was they who were asking her how much she had missed Dion.

It would be good to have him back, but she now suddenly realized, in a self-conscious way, that she had managed to be very happy without him. But then she had always looked forward to his eventual return. Suppose he had not come back?

She got up restlessly, went to the window and looked out into the garden. Robin was not there, nor was he in the house. Obedient to an impulse which she had not understood at the time, Rosamund had arranged a small, and rather odd, festivity for him which had taken him away from home, and would keep him out till five o'clock: he was having tea in a cake-shop near the top of Welsley High Street with his nurse and Mr. Thrush, who, not unexpectedly, had arrived in Welsley. The first meeting between his father and mother would not be complicated by his eager young presence.

So the garden was empty to-day. Not even the big young gardener was to be seen; he only came on four days in the week, and this was not one of them. As Rosamund looked down into the garden, she loved its loneliness, its misty, autumnal aspect. It was surely not her fault if she had a natural affection for solitude—not for the hideous solitude of a childless mother, but for the frequent privacy of a mother who was alone, but who knew that her child was near, playing perhaps, or gone for a little jaunt with his faithful nurse, or sleeping upstairs.

As she looked at the garden a faint creeping sense of something almost like fear came to her. Since Dion had been away she had surely altered, because she had had a new experience; she had, as it were, touched the confines of that life which she had deliberately renounced when she had married.

It seemed to her, as she stood there and remembered her long meditations in that enclosed and ancient garden, that in these months she had drawn much nearer to God, and—

could it be because of that ?—perhaps had receded a little from her husband.

The sense of uneasiness—she could not call it fear—deepened in her. Was the receding then implicit in the drawing near ? She began to feel almost confused. She put up a hand to her face ; her cheek was hot.

The clock in the room struck four ; two minutes later the chimes sounded, and then Big John announced the hour.

Dion might arrive at any moment now. She turned away rather quickly from the window. She hated the unusual feeling of self-consciousness which had come to her.

At ten minutes past four the door bell rang. It must be he. She went to the drawing-room door, opened it and listened. She heard a man's voice and a bump ; then another bump, a creaking, a sort of scraping, and the voice once more saying, " I'll manage, miss."

It was Dion's luggage. Harrington's man explained that the gentleman had said he would walk to Little Cloisters.

Rosamund went back into the drawing-room and shut the door. Now that Dion's luggage was actually in the house everything seemed curiously different. A period was definitely over ; her loneliness with Robin in Little Cloisters was at an end. She sat down in one of the two arm-chairs by the tea-table, clasped her hands together and looked at the fire.

If she had held to her girlish idea ? If she had become a " Sister " ? But—she shook her head as she sat there alone —Robin ! And then she sighed ; she had not thought, " But—Dion ! " She was almost angry with herself for being so introspective, so mentally observant of herself. All this was surely unnatural in her. Was she going to become morbid—she who had such a hatred of morbidity ? She tried to force herself to feel that she had missed Dion tremendously, that his return would make things right in Little Cloisters.

But had they ever been wrong ? And, besides, Little Cloisters would almost immediately be only a dear memory of the past.

Rosamund began almost to hate herself. Was she capable of any sort of treachery ? Swiftly she began to dwell upon all the dear goodness of Dion, upon his love, his admiration, his perpetual thoughtfulness, his unselfishness, his straight purity, his chivalry, his unceasing devotion. He was a man to trust implicitly. That was enough. She trusted him and loved him. She thanked God that he was back in England.

She had missed him more, much more than she had realized; she was quite sure of that now that she had recalled things. One happiness is apt to oust the acute memory of another. That had (quite naturally) happened in her case. It would indeed have been strange if, living in such a dear place as "My Welsley," with Robin the precious one, she had been a miserable woman! And she had always known—as women know things they do not know—that Dion would come back after behaving nobly. And that was exactly what had happened.

She looked at the arm-chair opposite.

How splendid it would be to see dear, brave, good, faithful Dion sitting in it in a moment, safe after all his hardships and dangers, comfortable, able to rest at last in his own home.

For Little Cloisters would be his home even if only for a few days. And then—— What about Mr. Thrush? What about—oh, so many things?

"I'll find the way all right," Dion had said at the station, after he had been assured that it was only ten minutes' walk, "or so," to Little Cloisters.

The little walk would be a preparation for the very great event. He only knew how great it was when he got out at the Welsley Station.

He had never seen Welsley before, though its fame had been familiar to him from childhood. Thousands of pilgrims had piously visited it, coming from afar; now yet another pilgrim had come from afar, sensitively eager to approach a shrine which held something desired by his soul.

That part of the city which immediately surrounded the station was not attractive, but very soon Dion came into a narrow street and was aware of an ancient flavour, wholly English, and only to be savoured thoroughly by an English palate. In this street he began to taste England. He passed an old curiosity shop, black and white, with a projecting upper storey, lattice windows with tiny panes, a door of black oak upon which many people had carved their names. By the door stood a spinning-wheel. In the window were a tea service of spode and a collection of lustre ware. There were also some Toby jugs.

Dion went in quickly and bought one for Robin. He carried it unwrapped in his hand as he walked on. One could do that here, in this intimate, cosy old town of dear England. He enjoyed the light mist, the moisture in the air. He had

come to hate aridity and the acrid dryness of dust blown by hot winds across great spaces. The moisture caressed his skin, burnt almost to the colour of copper by the African sun.

He came into the High Street. On its farther side, straight in front of him, the narrowest street he had ever seen, a rivulet of a street, with leaning houses which nearly formed an arcade, stretched to a wonderful grey gateway, immensely massive, with towers at its corners, and rows of shields above its beetling archway.

This must be the entrance to the Precincts.

In the tiny street he met a verger in mufti, an old bent man, with a chin-beard and knotty hands, English in every vein, in every sinew of his amazingly respectable and venerable body. This worthy he stopped, and inquired of him the way to Little Cloisters.

"Where Mrs. Leith and her boy lives, sir?" mouthed the old man, with a kindly gaping smile.

"That's it."

"She's a nice lady," said the verger. "We think a lot of her here, especially we Cathedral folk."

He went on to explain elaborately where Little Cloisters was, and to describe minutely two routes, by either of which it might be come at. It was evident that he was one of those who love to listen to themselves and who take a pride in words.

Dion decided for the route "round at the back" by Chantrey Lane, through the Green Court, leaving the Deanery on the left and the Bishop's Palace on the right, and so by way of the Prior's Gate and the ruins of the Infirmary through the Dark Entry to Little Cloisters.

"You can't miss it. The name's writ on the door in the wall, and a rare old wall it is," said the venerable man.

Dion thanked him warmly and walked on, while the verger looked after him.

"I shouldn't wonder if that's Mrs. Leith's husband home from the war," he murmured. "Looks as if he'd been fighting, he does, and burnt pretty near to a cinder by something, the sun as like as not."

And he walked on down the tiny street towards the muffin which awaited him at home, well pleased with his perspicuity, and making mental preparations for the astonishing of his wife with a titbit of news.

Dion came into the Green Court, and immediately felt Welsley, felt it in the depths of him, and understood Rosamund's love of it so often expressed in her letters. As he

looked at the moist green lawn in the centre, at the grey and brown houses which fronted it, at the Deanery garden full of the ruddy flowers of autumn behind the iron railings, at the immense Cathedral with its massive and yet almost tenderly graceful towers, a history in stone of the faithful work and the progress of men, he knew why Rosamund had come to live here. He stood still. In the misty air he heard the voices of the rooks. The door of a Canon's house opened, and two clergymen, one of them in gaiters and a shovel hat, came out, and walked slowly away in earnest conversation. Bells sounded in one of the towers.

He understood. Here was a sort of essence of ecclesiasticism. It seemed to penetrate the whole atmosphere. Rosamund was at home in it.

He remembered his terrible thought that God had always stood between his wife and him, dividing them.

How would it be now ?

Again he looked up at the great house of God, and he felt almost afraid. But he was not the man he had been when he said good-bye to Rosamund ; he had gained in force of character, and he knew it. Surely out there in South Africa he had done what his mother had wanted him to do, he had laid hold of his best possibilities. At any rate, he had sincerely tried to do that. Why, then, should he be afraid—and of God ?

He walked on quickly, and came to Little Cloisters by way of the Dark Entry.

It was very dark that day, for the autumn evening was already making its moist presence felt, and there was a breathing of cold from the old grey stones which looked like the fangs of Time.

Dion shook his broad shoulders in an irresistible shiver as he came out into the passage-way between Rosamund's garden wall and the ruined cloisters, immediately beyond which rose the east end of the Cathedral. South Africa had evidently made him sensitive to the dampness and cold of England.

"Little Cloisters." The white words showed on a tall green door let into the wall on his left ; and, as the verger had said, it was a rare old wall. So here it actually was ! He was at home. His heart thumped as he pulled at the bell, and unconsciously he gripped the Toby jug hard with his other hand.

## CHAPTER VI

"DION! Is it you at last?"

A warm voice called from above, and the blood rushed to his temples.

"Yes."

It seemed to him that he took the old staircase in his stride, and he had a feeling almost such as a man has when he is going into action.

"Rose!"

He held her in his arms and kissed her.

"It's—seemed a long time!"

He felt moisture springing to his eyes. The love he felt for her almost overwhelmed his self-control. Till this moment he had never known how great it was. All his deprivation was in that embrace.

"Years it's seemed!" he said, letting her go with a little laugh, summoned up—he did not know how—to save him from too much emotion.

She gazed at him.

"Oh, Dion, how you have altered!"

"Have I?"

"Tremendously."

How well he knew the kindly glance of her honest brown eyes; a thousand times he had called it up before him in South Africa. But this was not the glance so characteristic of her. In the firelit room her eyes looked puzzled, almost wide, with a sort of startled astonishment.

"You had a lot of the boy in you still when you went away. At least, I used to think so."

"Haven't I any left?"

"I can't see any. No, I think you've come back all man. And how tremendously burnt you are."

"Almost black, I suppose. But I'm so accustomed to it."

"It's right," she said. "Your face tells the story of what you've done. Robin"—she paused, then slowly she said—"Robin's got almost a new father."

"Where is he? He's sure to have altered more than I have."

"Oh no. He'll be in about five. I've sent him out to tea with some one you know."

"With whom?"

"Mr. Thrush."

"Mr. Thrush at Welsley?"

"Yes. I'll explain all that presently. I thought I'd have you all to myself for half an hour, and then Robin should have his turn. Here comes Annie."

When the two arm-chairs were occupied, Dion said:

"And you, Rosamund?"

"What about me?"

"Haven't you altered?"

"If I have, probably you would know it and I shouldn't."

"Yes, I dare say that's true. You aren't conscious of it, then?"

But she was giving him his tea, and that took her mind away from his question, no doubt. He felt a change in her, but it was not almost fiercely marked like the change in him, on whom a Continent had written with its sun and its wind, and with its battlefields. The body of a man was graven by such a superscription. And no doubt even a child could read something of it. But the writing on Rosamund was much fainter, was far less easy to decipher; it was perhaps traced on the soul rather than on the body. The new legend of Dion was perhaps an assertion. But this story of Rosamund, what was it? She saw the man in Dion, lean, burnt, strong, ardent, desirous, full of suppressed emotion that was warmly and intensely human; he saw in her, as well as the mother, something that was perhaps almost pale, almost elusive, like the still figure and downbent face of a recluse seen in passing an open window.

She saw in Dion his actions; he saw in her her meditations. Perhaps that was it. All this time he had been living incessantly in the midst of men, never alone, nearly always busy, often fiercely active, marching, eating, sleeping in company. And all the time she had been here, in the midst of this cloistral silence, and perhaps often alone.

"You know everybody here, I suppose?" he asked, drinking his tea with relish, and eating the toast which seemed to him crisply English, but always faintly aware of that still figure and of that downbent face.

"Almost everybody. I've sung a great deal, and got to know them all partly through that. And they're dear people most of them. They let one alone when they know one wants to be alone."

"And I expect you can enjoy being alone here."

"Yes," she said simply. "At times. It would be

difficult to feel lonely, in the miserable, dreadful way, I mean, in the Precincts. We are rather like a big family here, each one with his, or her, own private room in the big family house."

"I know you've always loved a certain amount of solitude, Rose," he said tenderly. "D'you remember that day in London when I burst in upon your solitude with Dante, and was actually jealous of the 'Paradiso'?"

"Yes," she said, smiling.

"But you forgave me, or I shouldn't be here now."

He gave her his cup for some more tea.

"You can't imagine how absolutely wonderful it is to me to be here after what I've been through."

He lay back in his chair, but he still looked tremendously alert, wiry, powerful even.

Dion was much more impressive than he had been when he went away. Rosamund felt a faint creeping of something that was almost like shyness in her as she looked at him.

"After Green Point Camp and Orange River—I shall never forget the dust-storm we had there!—and Springfontein and Kaffir River—oh, the heat there, Rose!—and Kaal-fontein, and all the rest of it. It was near Kaalfontein that we first came under fire. I shan't forget that."

He was silent for a moment. She looked at him across the tea-table. All that he knew and she did not know now made him seem rather strange to her. The uniting of two different, utterly different, experiences of life, was more tremendous, more full of meaning and of mystery, than the uniting of two bodies. This, then, was to be a second wedding-day for her and for Dion? All their letters, in which, of course, they had tried to tell each other something of their differing experiences, had really told very little, almost nothing. Dion's glance told her more than all his letters, that and his colour, and certain lines in his face, and the altered shapes of his hands, and his way of holding himself, and his way of speaking. Even his voice was different. He was an unconscious recorder of what he had been through out there; and much of it, she felt sure, he would never tell to her except unconsciously by being a different Dion from the Dion who had gone away.

"How little one can tell in letters," she said. "Scarcely anything."

"You made me feel Welsley in yours."

"Did I? Why did you walk from the station?"

"I wanted to taste your home, to get into your atmosphere, if I could, before seeing you. Rose, love can make a man almost afraid at times."

It seemed to her that his dark eyes burned with fires they had captured in South Africa. Sitting in the old room, with its homely and ecclesiastical look, he had an oddly remote appearance, she thought, as if he belonged to a very different milieu. Always dark, he now looked almost gipsy-like; yet he had the unmistakable air of a soldier. But if there had ever been anything there was now nothing left of the business man in Dion.

"Won't you find it very difficult to settle down again to the life in Austin Friars, Dion?" she said.

"Perhaps I should, but for one thing."

"What's that?"

"You and Robin at home when the drudgery is done."

Rosamund saw Welsley receding from her into darkness, with its familiar faces and voices, its grey towers, its cloisters, its bells, the Dresden Amen, the secret garden, the dreams she had had in the garden.

"Number 5 is all ready to go into. It was lucky we only let it for six months," she said quietly.

"Uncle Biron has given me a fortnight's holiday, or rather gladly agreed to my taking it. Of course I'm my own master in a way, being a partner, but I want to consider him. He was awfully good about my going away. Mother's looking well. She was at our Thanksgiving Service; Beattie and Guy too. I've had just a glimpse of godfather."

They talked about family things till Robin came in from his festivity with Mr. Thrush, who was staying at Little Cloisters, but only till the following day.

That was a great moment, the moment of Robin's arrival. Mr. Thrush did not appear with him, but, being a man of delicate perceptions despite his unfortunate appearance, retired discreetly to the servants' hall, leaving his devoted adherent free for the "family reunion," as he called it.

"Go up quietly, dear," said the nurse to Robin, "and tap at the drawing-room door."

"Shall I tap?" asked Robin earnestly.

He was looking unusually solemn, his lips were parted, and his eyes almost stared.

"Yes, dear. Tap prettily, like a young gentleman as you are, and when you hear 'Come in!'——"

"I know then!" interrupted Robin, with an air of decision.

He walked rather slowly upstairs, lifting one brown leg after the other thoughtfully from step to step, till he was outside the drawing-room door. Inside he heard the noise of a man's voice, which sounded to him very tremendous and important, the voice of a brave soldier.

"That's Fa!" he thought, and he listened for a moment as to the voice of a god.

Then he doubled his small fist and gave a bang to the door. Some instinct told him not to follow nurse's injunction, not to try to be pretty in his tapping. The voice of the soldier ceased inside, there was a brief sound of a woman's voice, then came a strong "Come in!"

Robin opened the door, went straight up to the very dark and very thin man whom he saw sitting by the fire, and, staring at this man with intensity, lifted up his face, at the same time saying:

"'Ullo, Fa!"

There was a dropped aitch for which nurse, who was very choice in her English, would undoubtedly have rebuked him had she been present. The dark man did not rebuke Robin, but caught him up and enfolded him in a hug that was powerful but not a bit rough. Robin was quite incapable of analysing a hug, but he loved it as he would not have loved it if it had been rough, or if it had been merely gentle. A sense of great happiness and of great confidence flooded him. From that moment he adored his father as he had never adored him before. The new authority of his father's love for him captured him. He knew nothing about it and he knew all about it, as is the way with children, those instinctive sparks fresh from the great furnace.

Long before dinner time Dion knew that he had won something beside the D.C.M. which he had won in South Africa, something that was wonderfully precious to him. He gave Robin the Toby jug and another gift.

He cared for his little son that night as he had never cared for him before. It was as if the sex in Robin spoke to the sex in him for the first time with a clear, unmistakable voice, saying. "We're of the comradeship of the male sex, we're of the brotherhood." It was not even a child's voice that spoke, though it spoke in a little child. Dion blessed South Africa that night, felt as if South Africa had given him his son.

That gift would surely be a weapon in his hands by means of which, or with the help of which, he would conquer the still unconquered mystery, Rosamund's whole heart. South Africa had done much for Dion. Out there in that wonderful atmosphere he had seen very clearly, his vision had pierced great distances; he saw clearly still, in England. War, it seemed, was so terribly truthful that it swept a man clean of lies; Dion was swept clean of lies. He did not feel able any longer even to tell them occasionally to himself. He knew that Rosamund's greeting to him, warm, sweet, sincere though it had been, had lacked something which he had found in Robin's. But he felt that now that he had got hold of Robin so instantly, and so completely, the conquest of the woman he had only won must be but a question of time. That was not pride in him but instinct, speaking with that voice which seems a stranger to the brain of man, but a friend to something else; something universal of which in every man a fragment is housed, or by which every man is mysteriously penetrated.

A fortnight's holiday—and then?

On that first evening it had been assumed that as soon as Dion went back to business in Austin Friars, No. 5 Little Market Street would receive its old tenants again, be scented again with the lavender, made musical with Rosamund's voice, made gay with the busy prattle and perpetual activities of Robin.

For two days thereafter no reference was made by either Rosamund or Dion to the question of moving. Dion gave himself up to Welsley, to holiday-making. With a flowing eagerness, not wholly free from undercurrents, Rosamund swept him sweetly through Welsley's delights. She inoculated him with Welsley, or at any rate did her best to inoculate him, secretly praying with all her force that the wonderful preparation might "take." Soon she believed that it was "taking." It was evident that Dion was delighted with Welsley. On his very first day they went together to the afternoon service in the Cathedral, and when the anthem was given out it proved to be "The Wilderness." Rosamund's quick look at Dion told him that this was her sweet doing, and that she remembered their talk on the hill of Drouva. He listened to that anthem as he had never listened to an anthem before. After the service Canon Wilton, who, though no longer in residence as "three months' Canon," was still staying on at his house in the Precincts for a few

days, came up to welcome him home. Then Mr. Dickinson appeared, full of that modesty which is greedy for compliments. Mrs. Dickinson, too, drifted up the nave in a casual way which scarcely concealed her curiosity about Mrs. Dion's husband; when, later, Rosamund told Dion of her Precincts' name, "the cold douche," he could not see its applicability.

"I thought her an observant but quite a warm-hearted woman," he said.

"She is warm-hearted; in fact she's a dear, and I'm very fond of her," said Rosamund.

"Every one here seems very fond of you," he replied.

Indeed, he was struck by Welsley's evident love of Rosamund. It was like a warm current flowing about her, and about him now, because he was her husband. He was greeted with cordial kindness by every one.

"It is jolly to be received like this," he said to Rosamund. "It does a fellow good when he's just come home. It makes him feel that there is indeed no place like England. But it's all owing to you."

But she protested.

"They all admire and respect you for what you've done," she said. "You've brought the best introductions here, your own deeds. They speak for you."

He shook his head, loving her perfectly sincere modesty.

"You may be a thousand things," he told her, "but one thing you'll never be—vain or conceited."

The charm of her, which was compounded of beauty and goodness, mixed with an extraordinary hold upon, and joy in, the simple and healthy things of life, came upon him with a sort of glorious newness after his absence in South Africa. He loved other people's love of her and the splendid reasons for it so apparent in her. But for Robin he might nevertheless have felt baffled and sad even in these moments dedicated to the joys of reunion, he might have felt acutely that the completeness and perfection of reunion depended upon the exact type of union it followed upon. Robin saved him from that. He hoped very much in Robin, who had suddenly given him a confidence in himself which he had never known till now. This was a glorious possession. It gave him force. People in Welsley were decidedly impressed by Mrs. Leith's husband. Mrs. Dickinson remarked to her Henry over griddle cakes after the three o'clock service:

"I call Mr. Leith a very personable man. Without having Mrs. Leith's wonderful charm—what man could have?

—he makes a distinct impression. He has suppressed force, and that's what women like in a man."

Henry took another griddle cake, and wondered whether he was wise in looking so decided. Perhaps he ought to suppress his undoubted force; perhaps all his life, without knowing it, he had hovered on the verge of the blatant.

Canon Wilton also was struck by the change in Dion, and said something, but not just then all, of what he felt.

"You know the phrase, 'I'm my own man again,' Leith, don't you?" he said, in his strong bass voice, looking steadily at Dion with his kindly stern eyes. (He always suggested to Dion a man who would be very stern with himself.)

"Yes," said Dion. "Why?"

"I think South Africa's made you your own man."

Dion looked tremendously, but seriously, pleased.

"Do you?" And what about the again?"

"Cut it out. I don't think you'd ever been absolutely your own man before you went away."

"I wonder if I am now," Dion said, but without any weakness.

He had been through one war and had come out of it well; now he had come home to another. The one campaign had been but a stern preparation for the other perhaps. But Rosamund did not know that. Nevertheless, it seemed to him that already their relation to each other was slightly altered. He felt that she was more sensitive to him than formerly, more closely observant of what he was and what he did, more watchful of him with Robin, more anxious about his opinion on various matters.

For instance, there was the matter of Mr. Thrush.

Dion had not seen Mr. Thrush on the evening of his first day at Welsley. He had been kept so busy by Rosamund, had done and seen so much, that he had quite forgotten the ex-chemist. In the evening, however, before dinner, he suddenly remembered him.

"What's become of Mr. Thrush?" he asked. "And, by the way, what is he doing down here? You never told me, Rose, and even Robin's not said a word."

"I asked him not to," said Rosamund, with her half-shrewd, half-soft look. "The fact is——" She broke off, then continued, with her confidential air, "Dion, when you see Mr. Thrush I want you to tell me something truthfully. Will you?"

"I'll try to. What is it?"

"I want you to look at his nose——"

"Rosamund!"

"No, really," she pursued, with great earnestness. "And I want you to tell me whether you think, honestly think, it—better."

"But why?"

"It's very important for Mr. Thrush that it should look better. He's down here to be seen."

Her voice had become almost mysterious.

"To be seen? By whom? Is he on show in the town?"

"No—don't laugh. It's really important for his future. I must tell you something. He's taken the modified pledge."

Her look said, "There! what d'you think of that?"

"Modified!" said Dion, rather doubtfully.

"Never between meals—never."

"At any rate that's a step in the right direction."

"Isn't it? I took it with him."

"The modified pledge?"

"Yes," she said, with great seriousness.

"But you never——! To help him, of course."

"Yes."

"And has it made a difference to the nose?"

"I think it's made a considerable difference. But I want your opinion."

"I'll give it you for what it's worth. But who's going to see Mr. Thrush?"

"The Dean."

"The Dean! Why on earth?"

"Almost directly there's going to be a vacancy among the vergers, and the Dean has promised me faithfully that if Mr. Thrush seems suitable he shall have the post."

"Mr. Thrush a verger! Mr. Thrush carry a poker before a bishop!"

"Not a poker, only a white wand. I've been making him practise here in the garden, and he does it quite admirably already."

She spoke now with almost defiant emphasis. Dion loved her for the defiance and for its deliciously absurd reason.

"The Dean is away, but he's coming back to-morrow, so I begin to feel rather anxious. Of course, he'll see at once that Mr. Thrush is an educated man. I'm not afraid about that. It's only—well, the little failing. It would mean so

much to Mr. Thrush to get the post. He'd be provided for for life. I've set my heart on it."

Annie came in.

"Oh, Annie, is it Mr. Thrush?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Please ask him to come in."

With a very casual air, as of one doing a thing for no particular reason and almost without thought, she lowered the wick of the lamp which illuminated the room.

"We don't want it to flare," she said, as she came away from it. "Oh, Mr. Thrush, here's my husband back again!"

With a certain unostentatious dignity Mr. Thrush stepped into the room. He was most respectably dressed in a neat black suit, the coat of which looked rather like either a frock coat which was in course of diminishing gradually into what tailors call "a morning coat," or a morning coat which was in course of expanding gently into a frock coat; a speckless collar with points appeared above a black bow tie at his thin and pathetic old neck; he carried a pair of dark worsted gloves, and a hat which resembled a square bowler half-way on the road to top hatdom.

Dion felt touched by his appearance and his gait, which seemed to hint at those rehearsals in the garden, and especially touched by the fact that he had bought a new hat.

"Welcome home, sir!" he said at once to Dion. "I'm sure the country is proud of you."

He paid the compliment with so much sincerity that Dion did not feel embarrassed by it.

"Do sit down, Mr. Thrush," said Rosamund, after hands had been cordially shaken. "No, not there!"—as he was about to sit full in the lamplight—"This chair will be more comfortable. Now I'll leave you to have a little talk with my husband."

With an inquiring look at Dion she went out of the room.

Before she came back Mr. Thrush had told Dion all his hopes and fears with regard to the Dean, and had dwelt on his overwhelming desire to become a verger. Quite unself-conscious in his simplicity he rose almost to dignity. He frankly confessed his "failing," and alluded to the taking of the modified pledge.

"We took it together, sir, your kind lady and I, we both pledged ourselves never to touch a drop of liquor between meals whatever the occasion."

"Quite right!" said Dion, with firmness, almost with brusqueness.

"I'm glad you think so, sir. But a verger can't be too careful. He's held up as an example to the whole city by his position, walking so often in procession as he does before the eyes of all men. Even a chemist scarcely takes so much upon himself. In respect of the body he may, I'll allow you,—for no verger has to do with prussic acid, iodine, cascara and all such-like,—but in respect of what I might call the uplifting of the soul not a doubt of it but that the verger comes far before any chemist. It's a solemn thing to think of, and I hope, if so be as I'm elected, I shall be worthy of the position. I see Mr. Dean to-morrow, sir, at eleven o'clock. I trust I shall make a favourable impression. I lived just off Hanover Square for more years than some can remember, and that, I hope, with a Very Reverend will tell in my favour. None of the vergers here, though I'm sure they're a splendid body of men,—anyone who has seen them walking before his Lordship, the Bishop, the Canons and what not, as I did last Sunday morning, would say the same,—but none of the vergers here can say as much. I've made inquiry, but of course with all discretion. As to the duties, sir, I think I can fulfil them. The carrying of the wand I may say I am almost perfect in already. I've been at it in the garden with your kind good lady since I came. I found it a bit difficult at first, sir. There's a what you might call a knack to it, though from the congregation it looks simple enough. But there, what does a congregation know of the things a verger has to master any more than it does of what is required of a good chemist? Often and often when I was just off Hanover Square——"

He was still flowing on with imperturbable volubility when Rosamund came back and sent another, more inquiring, glance to Dion.

When Mr. Thrush had retired she at once said anxiously:

"Well?"

"He's a nice old chap."

"Yes, isn't he? But what did you really think?"

"About the nose?"

"Yes."

"The lamp was turned rather low, but I really believe the modified pledge has——"

"There! What did I say?" she interrupted triumphantly. "I knew you'd notice the difference. It's really very much like yours or mine now, and I'm sure——"

But here Dion broke in decisively.

"No, Rosamund, I can't let that pass. It's not like yours yet. I say nothing about mine. But I honestly think it's modified and I hope the Dean will pass it."

"The Dean and I are great cronies!" she murmured doubtfully. "My only fear is that after he is a verger Mr. Thrush may—may lapse if I'm not——"

She stopped, looking at Dion, and again he thought that she was more sensitive to his opinion, to his wishes, than she had formerly been. Her slightly changed attitude made Dion gladly aware of change in himself. He meant more to Rosamund now than he had meant when he left England.

## CHAPTER VII

THREE days had slipped by. Dion had been accepted as one of the big Welsley family, had been made free of the Precincts. During those three days he had forgotten London, business, everything outside of Welsley. It had seemed to him that he had the right to forget, and he had exercised it. Robin had played a great part in those three days. His new adoration of his father was obvious to every one who saw them together. The soldier appealed to the little imagination. Robin's ardour was concentrated for the moment in his pride of possession. He owned a father who—his own nurse had told him so—was not as other fathers, not as ordinary fathers such as stumped daily about the narrow streets of Welsley, rubicund and, many of them, protuberant in the region of the watch-chain. They were all very well; Robin had nothing against them; many of them were clergymen and commanded his respect by virtue of their office, their gaiters, the rosettes and cords that decorated their wide-winged hats. But they were not like "Fa." They had not become lean, and muscular, and dark, and quick-limbed, and keen-eyed, and spry, in the severe service of their country. They had not—even the Archdeacon, Robin's rather special pal, had not—ever killed any wicked men who did not like England, or gone into places where wicked men who did not like England might have killed them. Some of them did not know much about guns, did not seem to take any interest in guns. It was rather pitiable. Since his father had come

back Robin had had an opportunity of sounding the Archdeacon on the subject of an advance in open order. The result had not been satisfactory. The Archdeacon, Robin thought, had taken the matter with a lightness, almost a levity, which one could not have looked for from a man in his position, and when questioned as to his methods of taking cover had frankly said that he had none.

"I like him," Robin said ruefully. "But he'll never be a good scout, will he, Fa?"

To which Dion replied with discretion.

"There are plenty of good scouts, old boy, who would never make good archdeacons."

"Is there?" said Robin. "Why not? I know what scouts does, but what does archdeacons does?"

And with that he had his father stumped. Dion had not been long enough at Welsley to dive into all its mysteries.

On the evening of the third day Dion told Rosamund that he must go to London on the following morning.

"I've got something I must do and I want to tell you about it," he said. "You remember Mrs. Clarke?"

"Yes," said Rosamund.

"It must be more than two years since I've seen her. She lives a great deal in Constantinople, you know. But she sometimes comes to London in the winter. It's abominably cold in Constantinople in winter. There are perpetual winds from the Black Sea."

"Yes, I know there are. Esmé Darlington has told me about them."

"Mrs. Clarke's in London now."

"Did you see her when you passed through?"

"No, but I want to see her to-morrow. Rose, I'm going to tell you something which nobody else must know. I was asked to keep it entirely to myself, but I refused. I was resolved to tell you, because I don't believe in secrets between husband and wife—about their doings, I mean." (Just then he had happened to think of Mrs. Clarke's farewell telegram to him when he had sailed for South Africa.)

"I know how frank and sincere you always are, Dion," she said gently.

"I try to be. You remember that party at Mrs. Chetwinde's where you sang? You met Mrs. Clarke that night."

"Of course I remember. We had quite an interesting talk."

"She's clever. Lord Brayfield was there, too, that night, a fair man."

"I saw him. He wasn't introduced to me."

"Brayfield was shot in the war. Did you know it?"

"No. I thought I had read everything. But I didn't happen to see it."

"And I didn't mention it when I wrote. I thought I'd tell you if I came home. Brayfield, poor fellow, didn't die immediately. He suffered a great deal, but he was able to write two or three letters—last messages—home. One of these messages was written to Mrs. Clarke. He gave it to me and made me promise to convey it to her personally, not to put it in the post."

"Was Lord Brayfield in the C.I.V.?" asked Rosamund.

"Oh no. He was a captain in the 5th Lancers. We were brigaded with them for a bit and under fire at the same time. Brayfield happened to see me. He knew I was an acquaintance of Mrs. Clarke's, and when he was shot he asked that I should be allowed to come to him. Permission was given. I went, and he asked me if I'd give Mrs. Clarke a letter from him when I got home. It seems none of his brother officers happened to know her. He might have given the letter to one of them. It would have been more natural. But"—Dion hesitated—"well, he wanted to say a word or two to some one who knew her, I suppose."

Rosamund quite understood there were things Dion did not care to tell even to her. She did not want to hear them. She was not at all a curious woman.

"I'm glad you are able to take the letter," she said.

And then she began to talk about something else. Mr. Thrush's prospects with the Dean, which were even yet not quite decided.

By the quick train at nine o'clock Dion left Welsley next morning; he was in London by half-past ten. He had of course written to Mrs. Clarke asking if he could see her. She had given him an appointment for three o'clock at the flat she had taken for a few months in Park Side, Knightsbridge. Dion went first to the City, and after doing some business there, and lunching with his uncle at the Cheshire Cheese, got into a cab and drove to Knightsbridge.

Mrs. Clarke's flat was on the first floor of a building which faced the street on one side and Hyde Park on the other. Dion rang at a large, very solid oak door. In two or three minutes the door was opened by an elderly maid, with high cheek-bones and long and narrow light grey eyes, who said, with a foreign accent, that Mrs. Clarke was at home. After-

wards Dion knew that this woman was a Russian and Mrs. Clarke's own maid.

She showed Dion into a long curving hall in which a fire was burning. Here he left his hat and coat. While he was taking the coat off he had time to think, " What an original hall this is ! " From it he got an impression of warmth and of a pleasant dimness. He had really no time to look carefully about, but a quick glance told him that there were interesting things in this hall, or at any rate interestingly combined. He was conscious of the stamp of originality.

The Russian maid showed him into a drawing-room and went away to tell " Madame." She did not go out by the hall, but walked the whole length of the long narrow drawing-room, and passed through a small doorway at its farther end. Through this doorway there filtered into the drawing-room a curious blue light. All the windows of the drawing-room looked into Hyde Park, on to the damp grass, the leafless trees, the untenanted spaces of autumn.

Dion went to the fireplace, which faced the far doorway. There was not a sound in the room ; not a sound came to it just then from without. He could scarcely believe he was in Knightsbridge. Not even a clock was ticking on the mantelpiece above the fire, in which ship logs were burning. The flames which came from them were of various shades of blue, like magical flames conjured up by a magician. He looked round. He had never seen a room like this before. It was a room to live in, to have long talks in, to lie dreaming in, to read curious books in, to hear strange music in ; it was not a reception-room. Not crowded with furniture it was not at all bare. Its " note " was not austere but quite the contrary. It was a room which quietly enticed. Dion was not one of those men who know all about women's dresses, and combinations of colour, and china, and furniture, but he was observant ; as a rule he noticed what he saw. Fresh from South Africa, from a very hard life out of doors, he looked at this room and was almost startled by it. The refinement of it was excessive in his eyes and reminded him of something overbred, of certain Italian greyhounds, for instance. Strange blues and greens were dexterously combined through the room, in the carpet, the curtains, the blinds, the stuffs which covered the chairs, sofas, divans, cushions—blues and greens innumerable. He had never before seen so many differing shades of the two colours ; he had not known that so many shades existed. In the china these colours were repeated. The door by which

he had come in was of thick glass in a frame of deep blue wood and, by means of a mysterious light in the hall, was made mistily blue. All along the windows lilies were growing, or seemed to be growing, in earth closely covered with green moss. There were dwarf trees, like minute yew trees, in green and blue china pots.

And always the ship logs in the fire gave out the magical blue flames.

Certainly the general effect of the room was not only luxuriously comfortable, but also strangely beautiful, though there was nothing in it which a lover of antiques would have given his eyes for. To Dion, fresh from South Africa, the room looked too comfortable, too ingeniously beautiful. It struck him as ultra modern, ahead of anything he had ever yet seen, and almost as evil. But certainly it enticed.

He heard the distant sound of a woman's dress and saw Mrs. Clarke coming slowly in from the room beyond (another blue and green room perhaps), and he thought of Brayfield dying. He thrust a hand into the breast-pocket of his coat and brought out the dead man's letter.

Mrs. Clarke came up to the fire and greeted him. She did not look a moment older than when he had seen her last at Claridge's, or indeed than when he had first seen her standing under the statue of Echo in Mrs. Chetwinde's drawing-room. The same feverish refinement still was with her, belonged to her ; she looked as before, wasted as if by some obscure disease, haunted, almost distressed, and yet absolutely self-controlled, mistress of herself and unconscious of critical observation. Not even for a moment, seeing her thus again after a long interval of time, did Dion hesitate about her beauty. Undoubtedly she had beauty. The shape of her head was lovely, and her profile was like a delicate vision seen in water. The husky sound of her voice in her first words to him took him back to the Divorce Court.

" You haven't changed," she said, staring intently at him in her oddly impersonal way, which appraised and yet held something of inwardness.

" But people say I have changed very much."

" People ? "

" Well—my people."

" I don't call natural development change. I saw in you very plainly when we first met what you are now. You have got there. That's all."

Her lips were very pale. How strangely unshining her hair was.

"Yes, she looks punished!" he thought. "It's that look of punishment which sets her quite apart from all other women."

She glanced at the letter he was holding and sat down on a very broad green divan. There were many cushions upon it; she did not heap them behind her, but sat quite upright. She did not ask him to sit down. He would do as he liked. Absurd formalities of any kind did not enter into her scheme of life.

"How is Jimmy?" he asked.

"Brilliantly well. He's been at Eton for a long time, doing dreadfully at work—he's a born dunce—and splendidly at play. How he would appreciate you as you are now!"

She spoke with a gravity that was both careless and intense. He sat down near her. In his letter asking to see her he had not told her that he had a special object in wishing to visit her. By her glance at Brayfield's letter he knew that she had gathered it.

They talked of Jimmy for a few minutes; then Dion said:

"My regiment was brigaded with Lord Brayfield's for a time in South Africa. I was in the action in which he was shot, poor chap. He saw me and remembered that I was a—a friend of yours. When he was dying he wanted to see me. I was sent for, and he gave me this letter for you. He asked me to give it to you myself if I came back."

He bent down to her with the letter.

"Thank you," she said, and she took it without looking at all surprised, and with her habitual composed gravity. "There are Turkish cigarettes in that ivory box," she added, looking at a box on a table close by.

"Thank you."

As Dion turned to get a cigarette he heard her tearing Brayfield's envelope.

"Will you give me one?" said the husky voice.

Without saying anything he handed to her the box, and held a lighted match to her cigarette when it was between the pale lips. She smoked gently as she opened and read Brayfield's letter. When she had finished it—evidently it was not a long letter—she put it back into the envelope, laid it down on the green divan and said:

"What do you think of this room? It was designed and arranged by Monsieur de Vaupré, a French friend of mine."

"By a man!" said Dion irrepressibly.

"Who hasn't been in the South African War. Do you like it?"

"I don't think I do, but I admire it a good deal."

He was looking at the letter lying on the divan, and Brayfield was before him, tormented and dying. He had always disliked the look of Brayfield, but he had felt almost a sort of affection for him when he was dying. Foolishly perhaps, Dion wanted Mrs. Clarke to say something kind about Brayfield now.

"If you admire it, why don't you like it?" she asked. "A person—I could understand; but a room!"

He looked at her and hesitated to acknowledge a feeling at which he knew something in her would smile; then he thought of Rosamund and of Little Cloisters and spoke out the truth.

"I think it's an unwholesome-looking room. It looks to me as if it had been thought out and arranged by somebody with a beastly, though artistic, mind."

"The inner room is worse," she said.

But she did not offer to show it to him, nor did she disagree with his view. He even had the feeling that his blunt remark had pleased her.

He asked her about Constantinople. She lived there, she told him, all through the spring and autumn, and spent the hottest months on the Bosphorus.

"People are getting accustomed to my temerity," she said. "Of course Esmé Darlington is still in despair, and Lady Ermyntrude goes about spreading scandal. But it doesn't seem to do much harm. She hasn't any more influence over my husband. He won't hear a word against me. Like a good dog, I suppose, he loves the hand which has beaten him."

"You've got a will of iron, I believe," said Dion.

She changed the subject.

"I don't ask you to tell me about South Africa," she said. "Because you told me the whole story as soon as I came into the room. But what are you going to do now? Settle down in the Church's bosom at Welsley?"

There was no sarcasm in her voice.

"Oh—I'm going back to business in a few days."

"You'll run up and down, I suppose."

"It's too far, an hour and a half each way. I shall have to be in London."

He spoke rather indecisively.

"I'm taking a fortnight's holiday, and then we shall settle down."

"I've been to Welsley," said Mrs. Clarke. "It's beautiful but, to me, stifling. It has an atmosphere which would soon dry up my mind. All the petals would curl up and go brown at the edges. I'm glad you're not going to live there. But after South Africa you couldn't."

"I don't know. I find it very attractive," he said, instinctively on the defensive because of Rosamund, who had not been attacked. "The cosiness and the peace of it are very delightful after all the—well, of course, it was a pretty stiff life in South Africa."

Again he looked at Brayfield's letter. He wanted to tell Mrs. Clarke about Brayfield, but it seemed she had no interest in the dead man. While he was thinking this she quietly put out her hand, took the letter, got up and dropped it into the fire among the blue flames from the ship logs.

"I seldom keep letters," she said, "unless I have to answer them."

She turned round.

"I've kept yours," she said.

"The one I—it was awfully good of you to send me that telegram."

"So Allah had you in His hand."

"I don't know why when so many much better fellows——" He broke off, and then he plunged into the matter of Brayfield. He could not go without telling her, though hearing, perhaps, would not interest her.

All the time he was speaking she remained standing by the fire, with her lovely little head slightly bending forward and her profile turned towards him. The emaciation of her figure almost startled him. She wore a black dress. It seemed to him a very simple dress. She could have told him that such simplicity only comes from a few very great dressmakers, and is only fully appreciated by a very few women.

Brayfield, though he was dying, had been very careful in what he had said to Dion. In his pain he had shown that he had good blood in him. He had not hinted even at any claim on Mrs. Clarke. But he had spoken of a friendship which had meant very much to him, and had asked Dion, if he ever had the opportunity, to tell Mrs. Clarke that when he was dying she was the woman he was thinking about. He had not spoken interestingly; he was not an interesting man; but he had spoken with sincerity, with genuine feeling.

"She's a woman in a thousand," he had said. "Tell her I thought so till the last. Tell her if she had been free I should have begged her to marry me."

And he had added, after a pause :

"Not that she'd ever have done it. I'm pretty sure of that."

When Dion had finished, still standing by the fire, Mrs. Clarke said :

"Thank you for remembering it all. It shows your good heart."

"Oh—please ! "

Why didn't she think about Brayfield ?

She turned round and fixed her distressed eyes on him.

"Which is best, to be charitable or to be truthful ? " she said, without any vibration of excitement. "*De Mortuis*—it's a kindly saying. A true Turk, one of the old Osmanlis, might have said it. If you hadn't brought me that letter and the message I should probably never have mentioned Brayfield to you again. But as it is I am going to be truthful. I can say honestly peace to Brayfield's ashes. His death was worthy. Courage he evidently had. But you mustn't think that because he liked me I ever liked him. Don't make a mistake. I'm not a nervous suspicious fool of a woman anxiously defending, or trying to defend, her honour—not attacked, by the way. If Lord Brayfield had ever been anything to me I should just be quiet, say nothing. But I didn't like him. If I had liked him I shouldn't have burnt his letter. And now "—to Dion's great astonishment she made slowly the sign of the Cross—"*requiescat in pace.*"

After a long pause she added :

"Now come and see the other room. I'll give you Turkish coffce there."

## CHAPTER VIII

IT had been understood between Rosamund and Dion that he should spend that night in London. He had several things to see to after his long absence, had to visit his tailor, the dentist, the bootmaker, to look out some things in Little Market Street, to have an interview with his

banker, et cetera. He would go back to Welsley on the following afternoon. In the evening of that day he dined in De Lorne Gardens with Beatrice and Guy Daventry and his mother, and again, as in Knightsbridge, something was said about the Welsley question. Dion gathered that Rosamund's devotion to Welsley was no secret in "the family." The speedy return to Little Market Street was assumed; nevertheless he was certain that his mother, his sister-in-law, and Guy were secretly wondering how Rosamund would be able to endure the departure from Welsley. Beatrice had welcomed him back very quietly, but he had felt more definitely than ever before the strong sympathy which existed between them.

"I quite love Beattie," he said to his mother in the jobbed brougham with the high stepping, but slow moving, horse which conveyed them to Queen Anne's Mansions after the dinner.

"She is worth it," said Mrs. Leith. "Beatrice says very little, but she means very much."

"Yes. I wonder—I wonder how much of her meaning I thoroughly understand, mater."

"Perhaps about five per cent of it, dee-ar," observed Mrs. Leith in her sweetest voice.

And then she began to talk about Esmé Darlington.

That night Dion stayed at Queen Anne's Mansions, and slept in his old room.

In her room his mother lay awake because she wished to lie awake. In sleep she would have lost the precious sense of her boy's nearness to her. So she counted the hours and she thanked God; and twice in the night she slipped out into the hall, with her ample dressing-gown folded about her, and she looked at her boy's coat hanging on its hook, and she listened just outside his door. Once she felt certain she heard his quiet breathing, and then, shutting her eyes, for a moment she was again the girl mother with little Dion.

Little, little Dion! The soldier, burnt and hardened and made wholly a man by South Africa, was still that to his mother, more than ever that since he had been to the war.

That question of Welsley!

Going down in the train next day Dion thought about it a great deal. With his return the old longing, almost an old need it was, to give Rosamund whatever she wanted, or cared at all for, had come to him again. But something fought it, the new longing to dominate and the wish to give Rosamund

chances. Besides, how could they possibly live on in Welsley? He could not spend from three to four hours every day in the train. He might get away from London on Fridays and stay at Welsley every week till Monday morning, but that would mean living alone in Little Market Street for four days in the week. If he seemed willing to do that, would Rosamund consent to it?

Another test! He remembered his test before the war.

Mrs. Clarke's allusion to Welsley had left a rather strong impression upon him. He did not know whether he had a great respect for her, but he knew that he had a great respect for her mind. Like Beattie, but in a very different way, she meant a great deal. He no longer doubted that she liked him very much, though why he honestly did not know. When with her he felt strongly that he was not an interesting man. Dumeny was a beast, he felt sure, but he also felt sure that Dumeny was an interesting man.

Mrs. Clarke's wild mind attracted something in him. Through her eyes he was able to see the tameness of Welsley, a dear tameness, safe, cosy, full of a very English charm and touched with ancient beauty, but still——! Would the petals of Rosamund ever curl up and go brown at the edges from living at Welsley? No, he could not imagine that ever happening. A dried-up mind she could never have.

He would not see Welsley through the eyes of Mrs. Clarke.

Nevertheless when he got out of the train at Welsley Station, and saw Robin's pal, the Archdeacon, getting out too, and a couple of minor canons, who had come up for evening papers or something, greeting him with an ecclesiastical heartiness mingled with just a whiff of professional deference, Mrs. Clarke's verdict of "stifling" recurred to his mind.

Stamboul and Welsley—Mrs. Clarke and Rosamund!

The dual comparison made him at once see the truth. Stamboul and Welsley were beautiful; each possessed an enticing quality; but the one enticed by its grandiose mystery, by its sharp contrasts of marble stability and matchboard frailty, by its melancholy silences and spaces, by its obscure peace and its dangerous passion; the other by its delightful simplicity, its noble homeliness, its dignity and charm of an old faith and a smiling unworldliness, its harmonies of grey and of green, of stone and verdure, its serenity lifted skywards by many bells.

But at the heart of Stamboul the dust lay thick, and there was dew at the heart of Welsley.

Perhaps green Elis, with its sheep-bells, the eternal voices of its pine trees, the celestial benignity of its Hermes, was more to be desired than either Stamboul or Welsley. But for the moment Welsley was very desirable.

Dion gave his bag to an "outside porter," and walked to the Precincts with the Archdeacon.

He found Rosamund uplifted and triumphant; Mr. Thrush had finally captivated the Dean, and had been given the "situation" which Rosamund had desired for him. Her joy was almost ebullient. She could talk of nothing else. Mr. Thrush was to be installed on the following Sunday.

"Installed?" said Dion. "Is the Archbishop coming down to conduct the ceremony?"

"No, no! What I mean is that Mr. Thrush will walk in the procession for the first time. Oh, I shall be so nervous! If only he carries the wand as I've taught him! I don't know what Mr. Thrush would do without me. He seems to depend on me for everything now, poor old gentleman."

"I'm afraid he'll miss you dreadfully," said Dion.

"Miss me? When?"

Before he could answer she said quickly:

"Oh, by the way, Dion, while you've been away I've done something for you."

"What is it, Rose?"

She was looking gaily mysterious, and almost cunning, but in a delightful way.

"I don't want you to be bored during your holiday."

"Bored! Don't you realize that this is an earthly Paradise for me? You and Robin and peace after South Africa."

She looked very shrewd.

"That's all very well, but a man, especially a soldier man, wants sport."

She laid a strong and happy emphasis on the last word, and then she disclosed the secret. A brother of "the cold douche," a gentleman farmer who had land some four miles from Welsley, and who was "a great friend" of Rosamund's —she had met him three times at the organist's house—hearing of Dion's arrival, had written to say that he had some partridges which needed "keeping down." He himself was

" laid by " with a bad leg, but he would be very glad if Mr. Leith would " take his chance among the birds " any day, or days, he liked while at Welsley. The gentleman farmer could not offer much, just the ground, most of it stubble, and a decent lot of birds.

" Dear Mrs. Dickinson knew through me how fond of shooting you are. We owe it all to her," said Rosamund, in conclusion. " I've written to thank him, and to say how glad you'll be."

" But you must come too," he said. " You shot in Greece, you must shoot again here."

" I don't think I will here," said Rosamund, confidentially and rather mysteriously.

" Why not ? "

" Well, I don't think the Dean would approve of it. And he's been so bricky about Mr. Thrush that I shouldn't like to hurt him."

" I can't go alone. I shall take Robin then."

He spoke half-laughingly.

" Robin ? "

" Yes, why not ? I'm sure he'd love to go."

" Of course he would. But how could his little legs walk over stubble ? He's not four years old yet."

" Robin's got to be Doric. He can't begin too soon."

She smiled, then looked at him seriously.

" Dion, do you know that you've come back much more Doric than you were when you went out ? "

" Have I, Rose ? "

" Much more."

" Do you like me less because of that ? "

She blushed faintly.

" No," she said.

That faint blush made Dion's heart bound, he scarcely knew why. But he only said soberly :

" I'm glad of that. And now about Robin. You're right. He can't walk over stubble with me, but why shouldn't I stick him on a pony ? "

" Oh—a pony ! How he would love it ! "

" Can't I get hold of one ? "

" But Job Crickendon's got one ! "

" Job Crick—. . . ? "

" Mrs. Dickinson's brother who's lending you the partridges. Don't say another word, Dion. I'll arrange it all. Robin will be in the seventh heaven."

"And you must come with us."

Rosamund was about to speak quickly. Dion saw that. Her eyes shone; she opened her lips. But something, some sudden thought, stopped her. After a minute she said quietly:

"We'll see."

And she gave Dion a curious, tender look which he did not quite understand. Surely she was keeping some delicate secret from him, one of those dear secrets which perhaps will never be told, but which are sometimes happily guessed.

Dion could not help seeing that Rosamund eagerly wanted to attach him to Welsley. He felt that she had not honestly and fully faced the prospect of returning to live in London. Her plan—he saw it plainly; the partridge shooting was part of it—was to make Welsley so delightful to him that he would not want to give up the home at Little Cloisters. What was to be done? He disliked, he almost hated, the thought that his return should necessitate an unpleasant change in Rosamund's life. Yet something within him told him that he ought to be firm. He was obliged to live in London, and therefore it was only natural and right that Rosamund and Robin should live in London too. After this long separation he ought not to have to face a semi-bachelor life; three days of the week at Little Cloisters and four days alone in Little Market Street. He must put Rosamund to the test. That faint blush, which he would not soon forget, made him hope that she would come out of the test triumphantly.

If she did, how splendid that would be. His heart yearned at the thought of a Rosamund submissive to his wish, unselfish out of the depth of—dared he think of it as a new growth of love within her, tending towards a great flowering which would bring a glory into two lives? But if she yielded at once to his wish, without a word of regret, if she took the speedy return to London quite simply as a matter of course, he would feel almost irresistibly inclined to take her in his arms and to say, "No, you shall stay on at Little Cloisters. We'll manage somehow." Perhaps he could stand three hours daily in the train. He could read the papers. A man must do that. As well do it in the train as in an arm-chair at home.

But at any rate he would put her to the test. On that he was resolved.

At dinner that night Rosamund told him she had already written to "dear, kind Job Crickendon" about the pony.

"You might shoot on Monday," she said.

"Right you are. When we hear about the pony we'll tell Robin."

"Yes. Not till it's all delightfully settled. Robin on horseback!"

Her eyes shone.

"I can see him already with a gun in his hand old enough to shoot with you," she added. "We must bring him up to be a thorough little sportsman; like that Greek boy Dirmikis."

They talked about Robin's future till dinner was over. Dion loved their talk, but he could not help seeing that in Rosamund's forecast town life held no place at all. In everything, or in almost everything, that she said the country held pride of place. There was not a word about Jenkins's gymnasium, or the Open Air Club with its swimming facilities, or riding in the Park, or fencing at Bernardi's. Rosamund seemed tacitly to assume that everything which was Doric was connected with country life.

On the following morning she hastened out "to buy riding gaiters for Robin." She had his "size" with her.

Not a word had been said about Dion's visit to Mrs. Clarke. Rosamund's lack of all curiosity in regard to Mrs Clarke and himself gave him the measure of her faith in him. Few women, he thought, would be able to trust a man so completely. And this trust was the more remarkable because he felt positive that Rosamund distrusted Mrs. Clarke. She had never said so, but he considered that by her conduct she had proved her distrust.

It was a great virtue in Rosamund, that power she had to trust where trust was deserved.

Dear, kind Job Crickendon wrote that Master Robin could ride his pony, Jane, and welcome. The letter arrived on Saturday. Rosamund read it aloud to Dion.

"The people about here are the dearest people I've ever come across," she said. "So different from people in London."

"Why, what's the matter with people in London?" asked Dion.

"Oh, I don't know; they're more artificial. They think so much about clothes, and hats, and the way their hair's done."

"The men!"

"I was talking of the women."

"But is Job Crickendon a woman?"

"Don't be absurd, Dion. You know what I mean. The country brings out the best that is in people."

"That's a bad look out for me, who've lived nearly all my life in London."

"You would be yourself anywhere. Now about Robin. I've got the gaiters. They're not exactly riding gaiters—they don't make them for such little boys—but they'll do beautifully. But I don't want to tell Robin till Monday morning. You see he's got a very exciting day before him to-morrow, and I think to know about Monday on the top of it might be almost too much for him."

"But what excitement is there to-morrow?"

She looked at him reproachfully.

"Mr. Thrush!"

"Oh, of course. And is Robin coming to the Cathedral?"

"Yes, for once. It's a terribly long service for a child, but Robin would break his heart if he didn't see Mr. Thrush walk in the procession for the first time."

"Then we won't tell him till Monday morning. I'll hire a dog-cart and we can all drive out together."

Again she gave him the tender look, but she did not then explain what it meant.

That evening they dined with Canon Wilton, who had a surprise in store for them. Esmé Darlington had come down to stay with him over Sunday, and to have a glimpse of his dear young friends in Little Cloisters.

The dinner was a delightful one. Mr. Darlington was benignly talkative and full of kindly gossip; Canon Wilton almost beamed upon his guests; after dinner Rosamund sang song after song while the three men listened and looked. She sang her very best for them, and when she was winding a lace shawl about her hair preparatory to the little walk home, Canon Wilton thanked her in a way that brought the blood to her cheeks.

"You've made me very happy to-night," he said finally. And his strong bass voice was softer than usual.

"I'm glad."

"Not only by your singing," he added.

She looked at him inquiringly. His eyes had gone to Dion.

"Not only by that."

And then he spoke almost in a murmur to her.

"He's come back worth it," he said. "Good night. God bless you both."

The following day was made memorable by the " installation " of Mr. Thrush as a verger of Welsley Cathedral.

The Cathedral was not specially crowded for the occasion, but there was a very fair congregation when Rosamund, Dion and Robin (in a sailor suit with wide blue trousers) walked in together through the archway in the rood-screen. One of the old established vergers, a lordly person with a " presence " and the air of a high dignitary, met them as they stepped into the choir, and wanted to put them into stalls ; but Rosamund begged for seats in a pew just beyond the lectern, facing the doorway by which the procession came into the choir.

" Robin would be swallowed up in a stall," she whispered to Dion.

And they both looked down at the little chap tenderly, and met his blue eyes turned confidingly, yet almost anxiously too, up to them. He was wondering about all this whispering with the verger, and hoping that nothing had happened to Mr. Thrush.

They found perfect seats in a pew just beyond the deanery stalls. Far up in the distance above them one bell, the five minutes' bell, was chiming. Its voice recalled to Rosamund the " ping-ping " of the bell of St. Mary's Church which had welcomed her in the fog. How much had happened since then ! Robin was nestling against her. He sat between her and his father, and was holding his father's hand. By dividing Dion from her he united her with Dion. She thought of the mystery of the Trinity, and then of their mystery, the mystery of father, mother and child. To-day she felt very happy, and happy in an unusual way. In her happiness she knew that, in a sort of under way, she had almost dreaded Dion's return. She had been so peacefully content, so truly at rest and deeply serene in the life at Welsley with Robin. In her own heart she could not deny that she had loved having her Robin all to herself ; and she had loved, too, the long hours of solitude during which, in day-dreams, she had lived the religious life. A great peace had enveloped those months at Welsley. In them she had mysteriously grown into a closer relation with her little son. She had often felt in those months that this mysterious nearness could never have become quite what it had become to her unless she had been left alone with Robin. It was their solitude which had enabled her to concentrate wholly on Robin, and it was surely this exclusive concentration on Robin which had drawn him so very

close to her. All the springs of his love had flowed towards her.

She had been just a wee bit frightened about Dion's return.

And that was why at this moment, while the five minutes' bell was ringing, she felt so happy. For Dion's return had not made any difference; or, if it had made a difference, she did not actively regret it. The child's new adoration of his father had made her care more for Dion, and even more for Robin; for she felt that Robin was unconsciously loving in his father a strength and a nobility which were new in Dion, which had been born far away across the sea. War destroys, and all the time war is destroying it is creating. Robin was holding a little bit of what the South African War had created as he held his father's hand. For are not the profound truths of the soul conveyed through all its temple?

"Happiness is a mystery," thought Rosamund.

And then she silently thanked God that this mystery was within herself, and that she felt it in Robin and in Dion.

She looked down at her little son, and as she met his soft and yet ardent eyes,—full of innocent anxiety, and almost of awe, about Mr. Thrush,—she blessed the day when she had decided to marry Dion, when she had renounced certain dreams, when she had taken the advice of the man who was now her friend and had resolved to tread that path of life in which she could have a companion.

Her companion had given her another companion. In the old grey cathedral, full of the silent voices of men who had prayed and been gathered to their rest long since, Rosamund looked down the way of happiness, and she could not see its end.

The five minutes' bell stopped and Robin sat up very straight in the pew. The Bishop's wife proceeded to her stall with a friend. Robin stared reverently, alert for the tribute to Mr. Thrush. Miss Piper glided in sideways, holding her head down as if she were searching for a dropped pin on the pavement. She, too, was an acquaintance of Robin's, and he whispered to his mother:

"Miss Piper's come to see Mr. Thush."

"Yes, darling."

What a darling he was in his anxiety for his old friend! She looked at the freckles on the bridge of his little nose and longed to kiss them. This was without doubt the most wonderful day in Robin's life so far. She looked ahead and

saw how many wonderful days for Robin! And over his fair hair she glanced at Dion, and she felt Dion's thought hand in hand with hers.

A long sigh came from the organ, and then Mr. Dickinson was at work preluding Mr. Thrush. Distant steps sounded on the pavement behind the choir screen coming from some hidden place at the east end of the Cathedral. The congregation stood up. All this, in Robin's mind, was for Mr. Thrush. Still holding his father's hand tightly he joined in the congregation's movement. The solemnly pacing steps drew nearer. Robin felt very small, and the pew seemed very deep to him now that he was standing up. There was a fat red footstool by his left leg. He peeped at his father and whispered:

"May I, Fa?"

Dion bent down, took him under the arms and lifted him gently on to the footstool just as the vergers appeared with their wands, walking nobly at the head of the procession.

At Welsley the ordinary vergers did not march up the choir to the return stalls, but divided and formed up in two lines at the entrance, making a dignified avenue down which the choristers and the clergy passed with calm insouciance into the full view of the waiting congregation. Only two picked men, with wands of silver, preceded the dignitaries to their massive stalls. Mr. Thrush was—though not in Robin's eyes—an ordinary verger. He would not therefore penetrate into the choir. But, mercifully, he with one other had been placed in the forefront of the procession. He led the way, and Robin and his parents had a full and satisfying view of him as the procession curved round and made for the screen. In his dark and flowing robe he came on majestical, holding his wand quite perfectly, and looking not merely self-possessed but—as Rosamund afterwards put it—"almost uplifted."

Robin began to breathe hard as he gazed. From Mr. Thrush's shoulders the robe swung with his lordly movements. He reached the entrance. It seemed as if nothing could prevent him from floating on, in all the pride and dignity of his new office, to the very steps of the Dean's stall. But discipline held him. He stood aside; he came to rest with his wand before him; he let the procession pass by, and then, almost mystically, he evaporated with his brother vergers.

Rosamund sent a quick look to Dion, a look of subdued and yet bright triumph. Then she glanced down at Robin. She had been scarcely less excited, less strung up, than he.

But she had seen the fruit of her rehearsals and now she was satisfied. Robin, she saw, was more than satisfied. His eyes were round with the glory of it all.

That was the happiest Sunday Dion had ever spent, and it was fated to close in a happiness welling up out of the very deeps of the heart.

Canon Wilton and Esmé Darlington came in to tea, and Mr. Thrush was entertained at a sumptuous repast in the nursery "between the services." Robin presided at it with anxious rapture, being now just a little in awe of his faithful old friend. His nurse, who approved of Mr. Thrush, and was much impressed by the fact that after two interviews with the Dean he had been appointed to a post in the Cathedral, sat down to it too; and Rosamund and Dion looked in to congratulate Mr. Thrush, and to tell him how delighted they were with his bearing in the procession and his delicately adroit manipulation of his wand. Mr. Thrush received their earnest congratulations with the quiet dignity of one who felt that they did not spring from exaggeration of sentiment. Like all great artists he knew when he had done well. But when Rosamund and Dion were about to retire, and to leave him with Robin and the nurse to the tea and well-buttered toast, he suddenly emerged into an emotion which did him credit.

"Madam!" he said to Rosamund, in a rather hoarse and tremulous voice.

"Now don't trouble to get up again, dear Mr. Thrush. Yes, what is it?"

Mr. Thrush looked down steadily at the "round" which glistened on his plate. Something fell upon it.

"Oh, Mr. Thush——!" began Robin, and paused in dismay, looking up at his mother.

"Madam," said Mr. Thrush again, still looking at the "round," "I haven't felt as I do now since I stood behind my counter just off Hanover Square, respected. Yes," he said, and his old voice quavered upwards, gaining in strength, "respected by all who knew me. *She* was with me then, and now she isn't. But I feel—I feel—I'm respected again."

Something else fell upon the toast.

"And it's all your doing, madam. I—all I can say is that I—all I can say——" His voice failed.

Rosamund put her hand on his shoulder.

"There, Mr. Thrush, there! I know, I know just how it is."

"Madam," said Mr. Thrush, with quavering emphasis, "one can depend upon you, a man can depend upon you. What you undertake you carry through, even if it's only the putting on his feet of—of—I never thought to be a verger, never. I never could have looked up to such a thing but for you. But Mr. Dean he said to me, 'Mr. Thrush, when Mrs. Leith speaks up for a man, even an archbishop has to listen.'"

"Thank you, Mr. Thrush. Robin, give Mr. Thrush the brown sugar. He always likes brown sugar in his tea."

"It's more nourishing, madam," said Mr. Thrush, with a sudden change from emotion to quiet self-confidence. "It does more work for the stomach. A chemist knows."

"Dear old man!" said Rosamund, when she and Dion were outside in the passage. "To say all that before nurse —it was truly generous."

And she frankly wiped her eyes. A moment later she added:

"I pray he doesn't fall back into his little failing!"

She looked at Dion interrogatively. He looked at her, understanding, he believed, the inquiry in her eyes. Before he could say anything the kind and careful voice of Mr. Darlington was heard below, asking:

"Is Mrs. Dion Leith at home?"

Mr. Darlington was delighted with Little Cloisters. He said it had a "flavour which was quite unique," and was so enthusiastic that Rosamund became almost excited. Dion saw that she counted Mr. Darlington as an ally. When Mr. Darlington's praises sounded she could not refrain from glancing at her husband, and when at length their guests got up to go "with great reluctance," she begged them to come and dine on the following night.

Mr. Darlington raised his ragged eyebrows and looked at Canon Wilton.

"I'm by way of going back to town to-morrow afternoon," he began tentatively.

"Stay another night and let us accept," said Canon Wilton heartily.

"But I'm dining with dear Lavinia Berkhamstead, one of my oldest friends. It's not a set dinner, but I should hardly like——"

"For once!" pleaded Rosamund.

Mr. Darlington wavered. He looked round the room and then at Rosamund and Dion.

"It's most attractive here," he murmured, "and Lady

Berkhamstead lives in the Cromwell Road, at the far end. I wonder——"

"It's settled!" Rosamund exclaimed. "Dinner at half-past seven. We keep early hours here, and Dion goes shooting to-morrow with Robin and may get sleepy towards ten o'clock."

After explanations about Robin, Mr. Darlington gracefully yielded. He would wire to dear Lavinia Berkhamstead and explain matters.

As he and Canon Wilton walked back to the Canon's house he said:

"What dear people those are!"

"Yes, indeed," said the Canon.

"Happiness has brought out the very best in them both. Leith is a fine young fellow, and she, of course, is unique, a piece of radiance, as her beautiful mother was. It does one good to see such a happy household."

He gently glowed, and presently added:

"You and I, my dear Canon, have missed something."

After a moment the Canon's strong voice came gravely out of the winter darkness:

"You think great happiness the noblest education?"

Mr. Darlington began to pull his beard.

"You mean, my dear Wilton—— ?"

"Do you think the education of happiness is the education most likely to bring out the greatest possibilities of the soul?"

This was the sort of very definite question that Mr. Darlington preferred to get away from if possible, and he was just preparing to "hedge," when, fortunately, they ran into the Dean, and the conversation deviated to a discussion concerning the effect the pursuit of scientific research was likely to have upon religious belief.

After supper that evening—supper instead of dinner on Sundays was the general rule in Welsley—Dion lit his pipe. It had been a very happy day. He wished the happiness to last till sleep came to Rosamund and to him; nevertheless he was resolved to take a risk, and to take it now before they went to bed, while they still had two quiet hours before them. He looked at Rosamund and reluctance surged up in him, but he beat it back. Something told him that he had been allowed to come back from South Africa in order that he might build firm foundations. The perfect family life must be set upon rock. He meant to get through to the

rock if possible. Rosamund and he were beginning again. Now surely was the day of salvation if he played the man, the man instead of merely the lover.

"This has been one of the happiest days of my life," he said.

He was standing by the fire. Rosamund was sitting on a low chair doing some embroidery. Gold thread gleamed against a rough cream-coloured ground in her capable hands.

"I'm so thankful you like Welsley," she said.

"Won't you hate leaving Welsley?" he asked.

Rosamund went on quietly working for a moment. Perhaps she bent a little lower over the embroidery.

"I've made a great many friends here," she said at length, and——"

She paused.

"Yes—do tell me, Rose."

"There's something here that I care for very much."

"Is it the atmosphere of religion? There's a great deal here that suggests the religious life."

"Yes; it's that I care for."

"I was almost afraid of meeting you here when I came back, Rose. I remembered what you had once told me, that you had had a great longing to enter the religious life. I was half afraid that, living here all alone with Robin, you might have become—I don't know exactly how to put it—become cloistral. I didn't want to find you a sort of nun when I came back."

He spoke with a gentle lightness.

"It might have been so, mightn't it?"

She remembered her dreams in the walled-in garden almost guiltily.

"No," she said steadily—and as she spoke she felt as if she were firmly putting those dreams behind her for ever. "Motherhood changes a woman more than men can ever know."

"I—I know it's all right. Then you won't hate me for taking you both back to Little Market Street in a few days?"

He saw the colour deepen in her face. For an instant she went on working. Then she put the work down, sat back in the low chair, and looked up at him.

"No, of course we must go back. And I was very happy in Little Market Street."

And then quickly, before he could say anything, she began to recall the pleasant details of their life in West-

minster, dwelling upon every household joy, and everything that though "Londony" had been delightful. Having conquered, with an effort which had cost her more than even Dion knew, a terrible reluctance she gave herself to her own generous impulse with enthusiasm. Rosamund could not do things by halves. She might obstinately refrain from treading a path, but if once she had set her feet on it she hurried eagerly along it. Something to-night had made her decide on treading the path of unselfishness, of generosity. When Dion lit his pipe she had not known she was going to tread it. It seemed to her almost as if she had found herself upon the path without knowing how she had got there. Now without hesitation she went forward.

"It was delightful in Westminster," she concluded, "and it will be delightful there again."

"And all your friends here? And Mr. Thrush?"

"I don't know what Mr. Thrush will do," she said, with a change to deep gravity.

The two lines showed in her pure forehead.

"I'm so afraid that without me he will fall back. But perhaps I can run down now and then just for the day to keep him up to his promise, poor dear old man."

"And your friends?"

"Oh, well—of course I shall miss them. But I suppose there is always something we miss. There must be a crumpled rose leaf. I am far more fortunate than almost any woman I know."

Dion put down his pipe.

"I simply can't do it," he said.

"What?"

"Take you away from here. It seems your right place. You love it; Robin loves it. What's to be done? Shall I run up and down?"

"You can't. It's too far."

"I have to read the papers somewhere. Why not in the train?"

"Three hours or more! It's impossible. If only Welsley were nearer London! But, then, it wouldn't be Welsley."

"Now I know you'll go I can't take you away."

"Did you—what did you think I should do?"

"How could I tell?"

He sat down and took her hands.

"Rose, you've made this the happiest day of my life."

"Do you mean because——?"

She stopped. Her face became very grave, almost severe. She looked at him, but he felt that she was really looking inward upon herself. When at last he let go her hands she said:

"Dion, you are very different from what you were when you went to the war. If I seem different, too, it's because of that, I think."

"War changes women, perhaps, as well as men," he said tenderly.

They sat by the fire in the quiet old room and talked of the future and of all the stages of Robin: as schoolboy, as youth, as budding undergraduate, as man.

"Perhaps he'll be a soldier-man as his father has been," said Rosamund.

"Do you wish it?"

She looked at him steadily for a moment. Then she said:

"Yes, if it helps him as I think it has helped you. I expect when men go to fight for their country they go, perhaps without knowing it, to fight just for themselves."

"I believe everything we do for others, without any thought of ourselves, we do for ourselves," he said, very seriously.

"Altruism! But then I ought to live in London for you, and you in Welsley for me."

They both laughed. Nothing had been absolutely decided; and yet it seemed as if through that laughter a decision had been reached about everything really important.

## CHAPTER IX

A DOGCART from Harrington's had been ordered to be "round" the next day at noon. Dion had decided against a long day's shooting on Robin's account. He must not tire the little chap. In truth it would be impossible to take the shooting seriously, with Robin there all the time, clinging on to Jane and having to be looked after.

"It's going to be Robin's day," Dion said the next morning. "When are you going to tell him?"

"Directly after breakfast. By the way, Dion,"—she

spoke carelessly, and was opening a letter while she spoke,—"I'm not coming."

"Oh, but you must!"

"No; I'll stay quietly here. I have lots of things to do."

"But Robin's first day as a sportsman!"

"He isn't going to shoot," she said, with a mother's smile.

"Why won't you come? You've got some very special reason."

"Perhaps I have, but I'm not going to tell it. Women aren't wanted everywhere. Sometimes a couple of men like to be alone."

"Robin's a man now?"

"Yes, a little man. I do hope the gaiters will fit him. I haven't dared to try them on yet. And I've got him the dearest little whip you ever saw."

"Jane will have to look to her paces. I'm sorry you're not coming, Rose."

But he did not try to persuade her. He believed that she had a very sweet reason behind her abstention. She had had Robin all to herself for many months; perhaps she thought the father ought to have his turn now, perhaps to-day she was handing over her little son to his father for the education which always comes best from a man. Her sudden unselfishness—Dion believed it was that—touched him to the heart. But it made him long to do something, many things, for her.

"I'm determined that you and Welsley shan't part from each other for ever," he said. "We'll hit on some compromise. This house is on our hands, anyhow, till the spring."

"Perhaps we could sublet it," said Rosamund, trying to speak with brisk cheerfulness.

"We'll talk it over again to-night."

"And now for Robin's gaiters!"

They fitted perfectly; "miraculously" was Rosamund's word for the way they fitted.

"His legs might a-been poured into them almost, a-dear," was nurse's admirably descriptive comment on the general effect produced.

Robin looked at his legs with deep solemnity. When the great project for this day of days had been broken to him he had fallen upon awe. His prattling ardours had subsided, stilled by a greater joy than any that had called them forth in his complex past of a child. Now he gazed at his legs, which were stretched out at right angles to his body on a

nursery chair, as if they were not his. Then he looked up at his mother, his father, nurse; then once more down at his legs. His eyes were inquiring. They seemed to say, "Can it be?"

"Bless him! He can't hardly believe in it!" muttered nurse. "And no wonder."

A small sigh came from Robin. To his father and mother it came like the whisper of happiness, that good fairy which men cannot quite get rid of, try as they may. Two small hands went down to the little gaiters and felt them carefully. Then Robin looked up again, this time at his father, and smiled. Instinctively he connected his father with these wonderful appurtenances, although his mother had bought them and put them on him. With that smile he gave the day to his father, and Dion took it with just a glance at Rosamund—a glance which deprecated and which accepted.

When the dogcart was announced by Annie, with beaming eyes, Dion got his gun, Robin received his whip,—a miniature hunting-crop with a horn handle,—his cap was pulled down firmly on his head by Rosamund, and they set forth to the Green Court. Here they found Harrington's most fiery horse harnessed to quite a sporting dogcart and doing his very best to champ his bit. From the ground Robin looked up at him with solemn eyes. The occasion was almost too great. His father with a gun, his own legs in gaiters, the whip which he felt in his hand, the packet of sandwiches thrust tenderly by nurse into the pocket of his little covert coat, and now this glorious animal and this high and unusual carriage gleaming with light-coloured wood between its immense wheels! There was almost too much of meaning, too much of suggestion in it all. No words came to him. He could only feel and gaze.

A stableman with hard lips stood sentinel in front of the fiery horse, and put up a red forefinger on the right side of his temple to give them greeting.

"I'll get in first," said Dion to Rosamund, "and then you can hand me up Robin."

He put in his gun and took the reins, while Robin instinctively extended his arms so that his mother could take hold of him under them.

"Up we go!" cried Dion.

And he mounted lightly to the high seat.

"Now, Robin!"

Rosamund took hold of Robin, whose short arms were

still solemnly outstretched. She was about to lift him into the cart, but, overcome by an irresistible impulse, she paused, put one arm under the little legs in the gaiters, drew him to her and pressed her lips on the freckled bridge of his tiny nose.

"You darling!" she whispered, so that only he could hear. "I love you in your gaiters better than I ever loved you before." Then she handed him up to his father as if he were a dear little parcel.

"That's it," said Dion. "Put your arm round here, boy. Hold on tight! Let him go!"

The hard-lipped man stood to one side and the horse—well, moved. Robin gazed down at his mother with the faint hint of an almost shy smile, Dion saluted her with his whip, and the glorious day was fairly begun. Travelling with a sort of rakish deliberation the dogcart skirted the velvet lawn of the Green Court and disappeared from sight beneath the ancient archway.

Rosamund sighed as she turned to walk back to Little Cloisters. She had made a real sacrifice that day in giving up Robin to his father and staying at home. Secretly she had longed to go with her "men-folk" upon the great expedition, to be present at Robin's initiation into the Doric life. But something very dear in Dion had prompted her to be unselfish. Dion was certainly much more impressive to her since his return from the war. Even the dear things in him meant more. There seemed to be more muscle in them than there had been when he went away.

"Even our virtues can be weak or strong, I suppose," Rosamund thought, as she turned into the walled garden which she loved so much, and there followed the thought:

"I wonder which mine are."

She meant to spend that day in saying good-bye to Welsley. Dion had said they would talk things over again that night; probably he would be ready to fall in with any desire of hers, but she felt almost sure that she would not tell him how much she wished to say on at Little Cloisters.

An obscure feeling had come to her that perhaps it was not quite safe for her to remain any longer here in the arms of the Precincts. Looking backward to that which has been deliberately renounced is surely an act of weakness.

Even the imaginative effort to live a life that has been put aside is a feeble concession to an inclination at least partially morbid. Rosamund was in fact a mother, and yet, here in Welsley, she had, as it were, sometimes played at being

one of those " Sisters " who are content to be brides of heaven and mothers of the poor. For her own sake it was doubtless best to renounce Welsley at once. The new meaning of Dion would help her to do that bravely. He had often been unselfish for her ; she would try to counter his unselfishness with hers.

When she was in the house again she had a colloquy with the cook about the dinner for that evening. As Esmé Darlington had given up an engagement in London to come to Little Cloisters, her dinner must be something special. She told the cook so in her cordial, almost confidential, way, and they " put their heads together " and devised a menu full of attractions. That done she had the day to herself. Dion and Robin would come home some time in the afternoon, and they were all going to have tea together up in the nursery. It might be at half-past four, it might be at half-past five. Till then she was free.

For a moment she thought of going to see some of her friends, of telling Mrs. Dickinson and other adherents of hers that her days in Welsley were numbered. But a reluctance seized her. She felt a desire to be alone. What if instead of saying good-bye to Welsley, she said good-bye to her dreams in Welsley ? She summoned Annie and told her not to let anyone in.

" I am going to spend a quiet day, Annie," she said.

" Yes, ma'am," said Annie, with an air of intelligent comprehension.

" Though what else anyone ever does in old Welsley I'm sure I couldn't say," she afterwards remarked to the cook.

" You're a cockney at 'eart, Annie," replied that functionary. " The country says nothing to you. You want the parks, that's what you want."

" Well, I was brought up in 'em, as you may say," said Annie, whose father had been a park-keeper, and whose mother and grandmother were natives of Westbourne Grove.

By a quiet day Rosamund meant a day lived through in absolute solitude, a day of meditation in the cloistered garden. She would not have any lunch. Then she would have a better appetite for the nursery tea at which Robin would relate to her all the doings of the greatest day of his life. Precious, precious Robin !

She went down into the garden.

It was a mistily bright day of November. The sun shone through a delicate veil. The air was cold but not sharp.

Neither autumn nor winter ruled. It seemed like a day which had slipped into an interstice between two seasons, a day that was somehow rare and exceptional, holding a faint stillness that was strange. There was in it something of the far away. If a fairy day can be cold, it was like a fairy day. On such a day one treads lightly and softly and at moments feels almost as if out of the body.

Lightly and softly Rosamund went to and fro between the high and mossy walls of the garden, keeping to the straight paths. When the bells chimed in the tower of the Cathedral they sounded much farther away than usual ; the song of the thrush somewhere in the elder bush near the garden door was curiously remote ; the caw-caw of the rooks dropped down as if from an immeasurable distance. Through the mist the sunshine filtered, lightly pale and pure, a sensitive sunshine which would surely not stay very long in Rosamund's garden.

A sort of thin stillness had fallen upon the world.

And so another chapter of life was closing, the happy chapter of Welsley !

Something of sadness accompanied Rosamund along the straight paths, the delicate melancholy which attends the farewells of one who has regret but who has hope.

With the new Dion and with the old Robin, the Robin blessedly unchanged, she could not be really unhappy. Yet it was sad to give up the dear garden and all the dreams which belonged to it. Far down in her—she knew it—there was certainly a recluse. She could see the black figure, the sheltered face, the eyes looking down, the praying hands. It would have been very natural to her long ago to seek God in the way of the recluse. But not now !

Hermes and the child came before her. In the stillness of Welsley it was as if she heard the green stillness of Elis. She was quite alone in that inner room where stood the messenger with the wings on his sandals. Dion had stayed outside. He had been unselfish that day as to-day she had been unselfish. For she had wanted to go with the little gaiters. She could see the smiling look of eternity upon the face of the messenger. He had no fear for the child. He had mounted on wingèd feet to the region where no fear is. How his benign and eternal calm had sunk into Rosamund's soul that day in Elis. Far off she had seen through the frame of the Museum doorway a bit of the valley in which the Hermes had dwelt, and stretching across it a branch of wild olive. She

had looked at it and had thought of the victor's Crown, a crown which had even been won by a boy at the games.

Already then a fore-knowledge of Robin had been in her.

She had gazed at the branch and loved it. Certainly she had been dreaming, as she had afterwards told Dion, and in her dream had been Hermes and the child, and surely another child for whose future the messenger would not fear. The branch of wild olive had, perhaps, entered into the dream. Into a crown she had wound it to set upon a little fair head. And that was why she had suffered, had really suffered, when a cruel hand had come into Elis and had torn down the wild olive branch. Dion's hand!

That action had been like a murder. She remembered even now her feeling of anger and distress. She had been startled. She had been ruthlessly torn away from the exquisite calm in which, with the Hermes, she had been celestially dreaming. Dion had torn her away, Dion who loved her so much.

Why had he done it? Even now she did not know.

He had taken her out of that dream, and now he was going to take her away from Welsley.

The misty brightness was already fading from the garden; the song of the thrush was no longer audible: he had flown away from the elder bush and from Rosamund. The coldness and silence of the day seemed to deepen about her. Welsley was fading out of her life. She felt that. She was going to begin again. But as she had carried Elis with her when she left it, and the dear tombs and temples of Greece, when she had bidden good-bye to the bare and beautiful land whose winds and whose waters are not as the winds and the waters of any other region, so she would carry away with her Welsley, this garden with its seclusion, its old religious atmosphere, the music of the chimes, even the thrush's song from the elder bush. "Χαῖρε!" She must say that. But she had her precious possession. Another page of the book of life would be turned. That was all.

That was all? She sighed. A painful sense of the impermanence of the things of this world came suddenly upon her. Like running water life was slipping by; its joys, the shining bubbles poised upon the surface, drifted into the distance and—how quickly!—were out of reach.

Perhaps the great attraction, the lure of the religious life, was the sense felt by those who led it of having a close grip upon that which was permanent. The joys of the world

—even the natural, healthy, allowed joys—were shut out, but there was the great compensation, companionship with that to which no "χαῖρε" would ever have to be said, with that to which death only brought the human being nearer.

Rosamund stopped in her walk, and looked up at the great Cathedral which towered above the wall of the garden. She had been pacing to and fro for a long time. She did not feel tired, but she was beset by an unaccustomed sensation of weariness, mental and spiritual rather than physical.

After a minute she went into the house, found a rug and a book, came back into the garden, and sat down on a bench in a corner hidden from observation. This bench was close to the wall which divided the garden from the "Dark Entry." It was separated from the lawn and the view of the house by a belt of shrubs. Rosamund was fond of this nook and had very often sat in it, sometimes alone, sometimes with Robin. She had told the maids never to look for her there; if any visitor came and she was not seen in that part of the garden which was commanded by the windows of the house, they were to conclude that she was "out." Here, then, she was quite safe, and could turn the last page of the chapter of Welsley in her book of life.

She wrapped herself up in the big and heavy rug. The sun was gone, the mist had become slightly more dense, the air was colder.

Presently Dion and Robin would come back; there would be tea in the warm old-fashioned nursery, gay talk, the telling of wonderful deeds.

If only Robin did not fall off Jane! But Dion would take care of that. Dion certainly loved Robin very much. The bond between father and son had evidently been strengthened by the intervention of the war, which had broken off their intercourse for a time, and given Robin a father changed by contact with hard realities.

For a few minutes in imagination Rosamund followed the two figures over the stubble, the thin strong walking figure, and the little darling figure on pony back. Would Robin quite forget her in the midst of his proud and triumphant joy? She wondered. Even if he did, she would not really mind. She wanted him to be very happy indeed without her—just for a short time: that he could not be happy without her for long she knew very well.

Oddly, her sensation of weariness persisted. She recognized it now as wholly unphysical. She was certainly feeling what

people call "depressed." No doubt this unusual depression —for she had been born with a singularly cheerful spirit—was caused by the resolution she had taken to give up Welsley. Perhaps Welsley meant more to her even than she had supposed. But it was absurd—wasn't it ?—to be so dominated by places. People, certain people, might mean everything in the life of a woman; many women lived, really lived, only in and through their lovers, their husbands, their children; but what woman lived in and through the life of a place? She had only to compare mentally the loss of Welsley with—say—the loss of Dion, the new Dion, to realize how little Welsley really meant to her. Certainly she loved it as a place, but probably a woman can only love a place with a bit of her.

And yet to-day, she certainly felt depressed. Even the thought of the nursery tea did not drive the depression from her.

She opened the book she had brought from the house. It was a volume of Browning's poems. She had opened it at haphazard, and now her eyes rested on these words, words loved almost above all others by one of the greatest souls that ever spent itself for England :

> "I go to prove my soul!
> I see my way as birds their trackless way—
> I shall arrive! What time, what circuit first
> I ask not; but unless God send His Hail
> Or blinding fire-balls, sleet, or stifling snow,
> In some time, His good time!—I shall arrive:
> He guides me and the bird. In His good time!"

She read the lines three—four times. Then she laid the book down on her knees and sat very still. Consciously she tried to withdraw herself, to pass into meditation carrying the poem with her.

> "I see my way as birds their trackless way—
> I shall arrive!"

Rosamund was gazing downward at a coping of worn brick on which she had set her feet, but she did not see it now. She saw migratory birds travelling steadily through a vast expanse of grey sky; birds that were going, at the appointed time, to some far-distant place, in search of a golden climate, in search of the sun. Inevitably they would come into the golden climate, inevitably they would find the sun which they needed. Like them she was travelling through a vast grey

expanse, the life of the world. Robin and Dion were with her. They were seeking the sun which they needed. Surely, like the birds, they would find the sun at last. She had thought to seek her way deliberately. When she was quite a girl it had seemed to her that the human being had the power, and was therefore almost under the obligation, to find the way to God for herself. When she had contemplated entering the religious life the thought at the back of her mind had perhaps been something like this: "I'll conquer the love and the mercy of God by my own exertions; I'll find the way to God by my own ingenuity and determination in searching it out." Possibly she had never quite simply and humbly said in her soul, with Newman, "Be Thou my Guide." Now, as she sat in the garden, with the image of the migratory birds in her mind, she thought, "The birds do that. They give themselves to the sky, and God does the rest. He knows the way by which each human soul can best go back to that from which once it issued forth." Perhaps as a Sister, leading the hidden secluded life, she could not have found the way; perhaps she had to find it in the world, through Dion with whom she had united herself, or through Robin to whom she had given birth.

Through Robin! Yes, surely that was her way to God. "A little child shall lead them." The words started up in her mind without their context, and she realized that, though people believe it is the mother who teaches the child, nevertheless the mother learns the greatest truths from the child. Who living on the earth could keep her from sin as surely as her Robin? How could she be evil when Robin looked to her as the embodiment of goodness? What would she not do, what would she not give up, to increase Robin's love for her, to give him more reason for regarding her with innocent confidence and simple reverence?

Yes, Robin was surely her way to God.

And now, withdrawn into the very depths of meditation, and hearing no longer the distant voices of the rooks as they wheeled about the elm-tops near Canon Wilton's house, she went onwards down the way chosen for her by God, the "Robin-way."

Now Robin was a young child, and naturally looked up to her as a kind of Providence. Presently he would be a lad; inevitably he would reach the age when the growing mind becomes critical. Young animals gnaw hard things to test the strength of their teeth; so do young growing minds gnaw

the bones that come in their way. Even the mother comes in for much secret criticism from the son who loves her. Rosamund's time for being criticized by Robin would come in the course of the years. She must try to get ready against that time ; she must try to be worthy of Robin's love when he was able to be critical. And so onwards down the way across the grey expanse, guided, like the birds !

Rosamund saw herself now as the mother of a tall son, hardened a little by public-school life, a cricketer, a rower, a swimmer ; perhaps intellectual too, the winner of a scholarship. There were so many hearts and minds that the mother of a son must learn to keep, to companion, to influence, to go forward with : the heart and the mind of the child, the schoolboy, the undergraduate, the young man out in the world taking up his life-task—a soldier perhaps, or a man of learning, a pioneer, a carver of new ways for the crowd following behind.

It was a tremendous thing to be a mother ; it was a difficult way to God. But it was the most beautiful way of all the ways, and Rosamund was very thankful that she had been guided to take it. Robin, she knew, had taught her already very much, but how little compared with all that he was destined to teach her in the future ! Even when her hair was white no doubt she would still be learning from him, would still be trying to lift herself a little higher lest he should ever have to look downward to see her.

For a long while she meditated on these things, for a very long while. The sun never came back to the garden as she dreamed of the sun which the birds were seeking, of the sun which she and Dion and Robin were seeking ; the afternoon hours passed on in a grey procession ; the chimes sounded many times, but she did not hear them. She had forgotten Welsley in remembering how small a part Welsley must play in her mother-life, in remembering how very small were the birds in the immense expanse of the sky.

In Meditation she had entered into Vastness.

The sound of the organ in the Cathedral recalled her. It was four o'clock. The afternoon service was just beginning. She sat still and listened. It was growing dark now, but she had no wish to move. Probably in half an hour Robin and Dion would come back from the shooting. From to-day she would think of Robin in a different way. He would be even dearer to her, even more sacred, her little teacher. What did it matter where she lived if her little teacher was with her ?

The sting had gone out of her unselfishness ; she was glad she had been able to be unselfish, to put Dion before herself.

The organ ceased. They were praying now in the Cathedral. Presently she heard them singing the psalms faintly. The voices of the boys came to her with a sort of vague sweetness through the gathering darkness and the mist. They died away ; the Magnificat followed, then silence, then the Nunc Dimittis, then another silence, presently the anthem. Finally she heard the organ alone in a Fugue of Bach.

The quarter to five chimed in the tower. Dion and Robin were a little late.

She got up, and carried the rug into the house.

" Annie ! " she called.

Annie came.

" When Mr. Leith and Robin come back,—they'll be here directly,—will you ask them to give me a call ? I shall be in the garden."

" Very well, ma'am."

Again Rosamund paced up and down the paths. Now she was very conscious of herself and of her surroundings. The long night of early winter was falling upon Welsley. Five o'clock struck, a quarter-past five, then the half-hour. She stood still on the path, beginning to wonder. How late they were ! Robin would surely be very tired. It would be too much for him. Directly he had had his tea he must be put to bed. Or perhaps it would be best to put him to bed at once. He would be disappointed, but they could easily have tea in the night nursery. She smiled, conjuring up a picture of Robin under the bedclothes being fed with pieces of cake. He would enjoy that. And she would hold his cup for him while he drank, so that the bed might be safe. Meals in bed are often dangerous to the bed. How delightful were all the little absurd things she did for Robin !

When the chimes told her that it was a quarter to six she began to feel puzzled, and just the least little bit anxious. It had been quite dark for a long while now. Job Crickendon's farm was only about four miles from Welsley. Harrington's horse might not be an exceptionally fast-goer, but surely he could cover six miles in an hour. Dion and Robin could get back in forty minutes at the most. They must have stayed on at Job Crickendon's till past five o'clock. Could they have had tea there ? No, she was sure they would not have done that, when they knew she was waiting for them, was looking forward eagerly to tea in the nursery.

When six o'clock struck and they had not returned she felt really uneasy, although she was not at all a nervous mother, and seldom, or never, worried about her little son. She could not doubt any longer that something unexpected had occurred. They were dining at half-past seven that night. In an hour's time at the latest she and Dion would have to dress. The hopes she had set on the family tea were vanishing. In her uneasiness she began to feel almost absurdly disappointed about the tea. She was hungry, too; she had had no lunch just because of the tea. It was to be a sort of family revel, and she had wished to enjoy it in every way, to make of it a real meal. Her abstention from lunch now seemed to her almost pitiful. Disappointment became acute in her. Yet even now her uneasiness, though definite, was not strong. If it had been she would not have been able to feel so disappointed, even so sorry for herself. She had given up the day to Dion. The nursery tea was to have been her little reward. Now she would be deprived of it. For a moment she felt hurt, almost the least bit angry.

As the words formed themselves in her mind she heard the quarter-past six chime out in the tower. She stood still on the path. What had happened? Perhaps Robin had fallen off Jane and hurt himself, or perhaps there had been an accident when they were driving home. Harrington's horse was probably a crock. He might have fallen down. The dogcart was a high one——

She pulled herself up. She had always secretly rather despised the typical "anxious mother," had always thought that the love which shows itself in perpetual fear was a silly, poor sort of affection. Even when Robin, as a baby, had once been seriously ill, at the time of the Clarke divorce case, she had been calm, had shown complete self-control. She had even surprised people by her fearlessness and quiet determination.

They did not know how she had prayed, and almost agonized in secret. She had drawn the calm at which they had wondered from prayer. She had asked God to let Robin get well, and she had felt that her prayer had been heard, and that God would grant her the life of her child.

Perhaps she had exaggerated to herself the danger he was in. But he was ill—for a short time he was very ill, and a baby's hold on life is but frail.

Now she remembered her self-control during Robin's illness, and resolutely she banished her anxiety. There was

no doubt some perfectly simple explanation which presently would account to her for their not coming at the tea hour.

"Ma'am!" cried a respectable voice. "Ma-a-*am*!"

"What is it, Nurse? They haven't come back?"

Nurse was coming down the path gingerly, with a shawl over her cap.

"No, ma'am. Whatever can have happened? *Something's* a-happened, that's certain."

"Nonsense, Nurse!"

"But whatever should keep them out till late into the night, ma'am?"

"It's only a little after six. It isn't night at all."

"But the tea, ma'am! And Master Robin's so regular in his habits. He'll be fair famished, ma'am, that he will. I—— Well, ma'am, if I may say it, I really don't hold with all this shooting, and sport, and what not for such young children."

"It's only just for once, Nurse. Go in now. You'll catch cold."

"But yourself, ma'am?"

"I'm quite warm. I'd rather stay out."

Nurse stared anxiously for a moment, then turned away and went gingerly back to the house. Her white shawl faded against the background of darkness. With its fading Rosamund entered into—not exactly darkness, but into deep shadows. She supposed that nurse's fear had communicated itself to her; she had caught the infection of fear from nurse. But when was nurse not afraid? She was an excellent woman and absolutely devoted to Robin, but she was not a Spartan. She leaped at sight of a mouse, and imagined diseases to be for ever floating Robinwards on all the breezes. Rosamund had strictly forbidden her ever to talk nonsense about illness to Robin, and she had obeyed. But that was her one fault; she had a timorous nature.

Rosamund wished nurse had not come out into the garden to infect her with foolish fear.

Nurse's invitation to her to come into the house had made her suddenly know that to be shut in would be intolerable to her. Why was that? She now knew that lately, while she had been walking in the garden, she had been straining her ears to hear the sound of wheels in the Green Court. She knew she would be able to hear them in the garden. In the house that would be impossible. Therefore she could not go into the house till Robin came back.

All her fear was for Robin. He was so young, so tiny. Perhaps she ought not to have allowed him to go. Perhaps nurse was right, and such an expedition ought to have been ruled out as soon as it was suggested. Perhaps Dion and she had been altogether too Doric. She began to think so. But then she thought: "Robin's with his father. What harm could come to him with his father, and such a competent father too?" That thought of Dion's strength, coolness, competency reassured her; she dwelt on it. Of course with Dion Robin must be all right.

Presently, leaving the path in front of the house, she went again to the seat hidden away behind the shrubs against the wall which separated the garden from the Dark Entry. This dark entry was an arched corridor of stone which led directly from the Green Court to the passage-way on which the main door of the garden opened. It was paved with worn slabs of stone upon which the feet of anyone passing rang with a mournful and hollow sound. A tiny path skirted the garden wall, running between the hidden seat and the small belt of shrubs which shut out a view of the house. Just before she turned into this path Rosamund looked back at the old house, and saw a lamp gleaming in the lattice window of the nursery. She did not sit down on the seat. She had thought to do that and to listen. But the mist had made the wood very wet, and she had left the rug in the house. If she walked softly up and down the little path she would be sure to hear the hoofs of Harrington's horse, the wheels of the dogcart directly the wanderers drove into the Green Court. There they would get down, and would walk home through the Dark Entry. She intended to call out to them when she heard their footsteps ringing on the old stones. That would surprise them. She tried to enjoy the thought of their surprise when they heard her voice coming out of the darkness. How Robin would jump at the sound of mummy!

She stood just in front of the seat for two or three minutes, listening intently in the misty darkness. She heard nothing except for a moment a rustling which sounded like a bird moving in ivy. Then she began to walk softly up and down, passing and repassing the seat. When she came up to the seat for the fourth time in her walk, an ugly memory—she knew not why—rose in her mind like a weed in a pool; it was the memory of a story which she had long ago read and disliked. She had read it, she remembered, in a railway

train on a long journey. She had had a book, something interesting and beautiful, with her, but she had finished it. A passenger, who had got out of the carriage, had left behind him a paper-covered volume of short stories. She had taken it up and had read the first story, which now, after an interval of years, recurred to her mind.

There was in the story a very commonplace business man, middle-aged, quite unromantic and heavy, the sort of man who does not know what "nerves" mean, who thinks suggestion "damned nonsense," and psychical research, occultism, and so forth, absurdities fit only to take up the time of "a pack of silly women." This worthy person lived in the suburbs of London in a semi-detached villa with a long piece of garden at the back. On the other side of the fairly high garden wall was the garden of his next-door neighbour, another business man of the usual suburban type Both men were busy gardeners in their spare time. Number one had conceived the happy idea of putting up a tea-house in the angle of the wall at the bottom of his lawn. Number two, having heard of this achievement, and not wishing to be outdone, put up a very similar tea-house in the corresponding angle on his side of the wall. The two tea-houses stood therefore back to back with nothing but the wall between them. Now, one warm summer evening Mr. Jenkins-Smith —Rosamund could remember his name, though she had not thought of him for years—had been very busy watering his flowers and mowing his lawn. He had worked really hard, and when the evening began to close in he thought he would go into the tea-house and have a rest. On each side of the curly-legged tea-table of unpolished wood stood a wicker arm-chair. Into one of these chairs Mr. Jenkins-Smith sank with a sigh of content. Then he lighted his pipe, stretched out his short legs, and, gazing at his beautifully trimmed garden, prepared to enjoy a delicious hour of well-earned repose. Things were going well with him; money was easy; his health was good; when he sat down in the wicker chair and put his pipe into his mouth he was, perhaps, as happy a man as you could find in all Surbiton.

But presently, in fact very soon, he became conscious of a disagreeable feeling. A curious depression began to come upon him. He smoked steadily, he gazed out at his garden green with turf and gay with flowers, but his interest and pleasure in it were gone from him. He wondered why. Presently he turned his head and looked over his shoulder.

What he was looking for he did not know; simply he felt obliged to do what he did. He saw, of course, nothing but the curved wooden back of the tea-house. He listened, he strained his ears, but he heard nothing except the faint "ting-ting" of a tram-bell, and voices of some children playing in a distant garden. His pipe had gone out. As he lit a match and held it to his pipe bowl he saw that his hand was shaking. Whatever had come to him? He was no drinker; he had always been a temperate man, proud of his clear eyes and steady limbs, yet now he was shaking like a drunkard. Perspiration burst out upon his forehead. He was seized by an intense desire to get away from the tea-house, to get out into the open, and he half rose from his chair, holding on to the arms and dropping his pipe on the wooden floor. The tiny noise it made set his nerves in a turmoil. He was afraid. But of what? He took his hands from the chair and sat back, angry with himself, almost ashamed. That he should feel afraid, here in his own garden, in his own cosy tea-house! It was absurd, monstrous; it was like a sort of madness come upon him. But he was determined not to give way to such nonsense. Just because he was longing to go out of the tea-house he would remain in it. Let the darkness come; he did not mind it; he was going to smoke his pipe.

Again he stared over his shoulder, and the sweat ran down his face. Had not he heard something in the tea-house of his neighbour on the other side of the wall? It seemed to him that he had rather felt a sound than actually heard it. Nausea came upon him. He got up trembling. But still he was ashamed of himself, and he would not go out of the tea-house. Instead he went behind the table, stood close to the wooden wall, put his ear to it and listened intently. He heard nothing; but when he was standing against the wall his horror and fear increased until he could no longer combat them. He turned sharply, knocked over a chair, and hurried out into the garden. There for a moment he stood still. Under the sky he felt better, but not himself; he did not feel himself at all. After a pause for consideration he put on his jacket,—he had been gardening in his shirt-sleeves,—went into his house, out into the road, and then up to the door of his neighbour. There he rang the bell and knocked. A maid came. "Is your master in?" he asked. "Yes, sir, he's sitting in the summer-house at the end of the garden." "How long's he been there?" "About half an hour, sir, as near as I can reckon." "Could I see him?" "Certainly,

sir." "Perhaps you'd—perhaps you'd show me to the summer-house." "Yes, sir."

Mr. Jenkins-Smith and the maid went to the end of the garden, and there, in the summer-house, they found the corpse of a suicide hanging from a beam in the roof.

This was the ugly story which had come into Rosamund's mind as she stood by the seat close to the garden wall. On the other side of Mr. Jenkins-Smith's wall had been the summer-house of his neighbour; on the other side of her wall there was the Dark Entry. She stood considering this fact and thinking of the man's terror in his garden. He had been subject surely to an emanation. A mysterious message had been sent to him by the corpse which dangled from the beam on the other side of the wall.

She went nearer to the wall of the garden and listened attentively. Had she not heard a sound in the Dark Entry? It seemed to her that some one had come into the stone corridor while she had been walking up and down on the path, and was now standing there motionless. But how very unlikely it was that anyone would do such a thing! It must be quite black there now, and very cold on the stone pavement, between the stone walls, under the roof of stone. Of course no one was there.

Nevertheless she went on listening with a sort of painful attention. And distress came upon her. It began in a sort of physical malaise out of which a mental dread, such as she had never yet experienced, was born. She felt now quite certain that some one was standing still in the Dark Entry, very close to her, but separated from her by two walls of brick and stone; and something of this unseen person, of his attention, or his anger, or his terror, or his criminal intent, in any case something tremendously powerful, pierced the walls and came upon her and enveloped her. She opened her lips, not knowing what she was going to say, and from them came the cry:

"Dion!"

Silence followed her cry.

"Dion! Dion!" she called again.

Immediately after the third cry she heard a slow step on the stones of the Dark Entry, passing close to her but muffled by the intervening walls. It went on very slowly indeed; it was a dragging footfall; the sound of it presently died away.

Then she sat down on the bench close to the wall. She still felt distressed, even afraid. Whoever it was—that loiterer in the Dark Entry—he had left the corridor by the

archway near Little Cloisters; he had not gone into the Green Court.

She sat waiting in the darkness.

. . . . . .

That afternoon while Rosamund was in the garden, Mr. Esmé Darlington was paying a little visit to his old friend and crony, the Dean of Welsley. He had known the Dean—well, almost ever since he could remember, and the Dean's wife ever since she had married the Dean. His delay in returning to town, caused by Rosamund's attractive invitation, enabled him to spend an hour at the Deanery, where he had tea in the great drawing-room on the first floor, which looked out on the Green Court. So pleasant were the Dean and his wife, so serenely flowed the conversation, that the hour lengthened out into two hours, and the Cathedral chimes announced that it was a quarter to seven before Mr. Darlington uncrumpled his length to go. Even then Mrs. Dean begged him to stay on a little longer.

"It's such a treat to hear all the interesting gossip of London," she said, almost wistfully. "When Dickie"—Dickie was the Dean,—"when Dickie was at St. Peter's, Eaton Square, we knew everything that was going on, but here in Welsley—well, I often feel rather rusty."

Mr. Darlington paid the appropriate compliment, not in a banal way, and then mentioned that at half-past seven he was dining in Little Cloisters.

"That delightful creature Mrs. Dion Leith!" exclaimed Mrs. Dean. "Dickie's hopelessly in her toils."

"My dear!" began the Dean, in pleased protestation.

But she interrupted him.

"I assure you," she went on to Mr. Darlington, "he is always making excuses to see her. She has even influenced him to appoint a new verger, a most extraordinary old person, called Thrush, with a nose!"

Mr. Darlington cocked an interrogative eyebrow.

"My darling!" said the Dean. "He's a good old man, very deserving, and has recently taken the pledge."

"He's a modified teetotaller!" said his wife to Mr. Darlington, patting her husband's arm. "You see what Dickie's coming to. If it goes on he will soon be a modified Dean."

It was past seven when they finished talking about Rosamund and Dion, when Mr. Darlington at length tore himself delicately away from their delightful company, and, warmly wrapped in an overcoat lined with unostentatious

sable, set out on the short walk to Canon Wilton's house. To reach the Canon's house he had to pass through the Dark Entry and skirt the garden wall of Little Cloisters.

Now, as he came out of the Dark Entry and stepped into the passage-way, which led by the wall and the old house into the great open space of green lawns and elm trees round which the dwellings of the canons showed their lighted windows to the darkness of the November evening, he was stopped by a terrible sound. It came to him from the garden of Little Cloisters. It was short, sharp and piercing, so piercing that for an instant he felt as if literally it had torn the flesh of his body. He had never before heard any sound at all like it; but, when he was able to think, he thought, he felt almost certain, that it had come from an animal. He shuddered. Always temperamentally averse from any fierce demonstrations of feeling, always instinctively restrained, careful and intelligently conventional, he was painfully startled and moved by this terrible outcry which could only have been caused by intense agony. As he believed that the cry had come from an animal, he naturally supposed that the agony which had caused it was physical. He was a very humane man, and as soon as he had mastered the feeling of cold horror which had for a moment held him rigid, he hastened on to the door of Little Cloisters and pulled the bell. After a pause which seemed to him long the door was opened by Annie, Rosamund's parlour-maid. She presented to Mr. Darlington's peering gaze a face full of ignorance and fear.

"What is the matter?" he asked, in a hesitating voice.

"Sir?" said Annie.

"What has happened in the garden?"

"Nothing, sir, that I know of. I have been in the house." She paused, then added, with a sort of timorous defiance: "I'm not one as would listen, sir."

"Then you didn't hear it?"

"Hear what, sir?"

Her question struck upon Mr. Darlington's native conventionality, and made him conscious of the fact that, perhaps almost indiscreetly, he was bandying words with a maid-servant. He put up one hand to his beard, pulled at it, and then said, almost in his usual voice:

"Is Mrs. Leith in?"

"She's in the garden, sir."

"In the garden?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is—is Mr. Leith at home?"

"He's just come home, sir, and gone to Mrs. Leith in the garden."

Mr. Darlington stood for a moment pulling his beard and raising and lowering his eyebrows. Then he said doubtfully:

"Thank you. I won't disturb them now. I shall be here with Canon Wilton at half-past seven."

Annie stood staring at him in silence.

"They—Mr. and Mrs. Leith expect us, I believe?" added Mr. Darlington.

"They haven't said anything to the contrary, sir."

"No?"

Slowly Mr. Darlington turned away, slowly he disappeared into the darkness; his head was bent, and he looked older than usual. Annie gazed after him. Once she opened her lips as if she were going to call him back, but no sound came from them.

"Annie! Annie!" cried a voice in the house behind her.

She turned sharply and confronted Robin's nurse.

"Where's Master Robin?" said the nurse, almost fiercely.

"I don't know. He hasn't come back with master."

"I'm going into the garden," said the nurse.

"For God's sake, don't!" said Annie.

"Why not?" asked the nurse.

Suddenly Annie began to cry. The nurse pulled her in and shut the door of the house.

## CHAPTER X

ROSAMUND did not know how long she sat in the garden after she had heard the footfall in the Dark Entry. Perhaps five minutes, perhaps many more had slipped by before she was aware of feeling cold. A chill had gone through her mind when she heard the footfall; now her body was chilled. She shivered and got up. She must go into the house.

It was now very dark. The path was a pale greyish blur at her feet. On her left the shrubs which concealed the house from her showed as a heavy morose blackness against

the softer and more mysterious blackness of the night. The dampness which rose in the garden was like the dreary whispering of sad earth voices.

She shivered again.

Then she heard a faltering step on the path beyond the shrubs. It was certainly Dion's step. At last they had come back!

With a movement of her shoulders she tried to throw off her depression, as if it were something heavy resting upon her, something which a physical effort could get rid of. Then she called out in a brisk and cheerful voice:

"Dion, I'm here. How late you are! What have you shot?"

It was too late now for the nursery tea, but they had come back and all was well.

"Dion!"

The step had stopped on the path and no voice answered hers. Nevertheless she was certain that it was Dion who had come into the garden. Perhaps Robin was with him, perhaps they were going to give her a surprise. She waited for an instant. Something within her was hesitating. She conquered it, not without an effort, and went round the angle of the path. Beyond the shrubs, but not far from them, a man was standing. It was Dion. He was alone. It was so dark that Rosamund could not see him clearly, but she noticed at once that the outline of his figure looked strange. His body seemed to be all awry as if he were standing in an unnatural position. She stopped and stared at this body.

"Is anything wrong, Dion?" she asked. "What's the matter? Why do you stand like that?"

After her last quick question she heard a long-drawn quivering breath.

"Where's Robin?" she said sharply.

He did not answer. She meant to go up to him; but she did not move.

"Why are you so late? Where's Robin?" she repeated.

"Rosamund——"

"Don't move! Stand there, and tell me what it is."

"Haven't I—always tried to make you happy?"

The words came from the body before her, but she did not know the voice. It was Dion's voice, of course. It must be that. But she had never heard it before.

"Don't come nearer to me. What have you done?"

"Robin—I have—I have—Robin—my gun——"

The voice failed in the darkness. Rosamund shut her eyes. She had seen an angry hand tear down a branch of wild olive. Suddenly she knew. It seemed to her that ever since that day long ago in Elis some part of her had always prophetically known that Dion was fated to bring terror and ruin into her life. This was not true, but now she felt it to be true.

"You've killed Robin," she said, quietly and coldly.

Her brain and heart seemed to stand still, like things staring into an immense void. They had come to the end of their road.

"You've killed Robin," she said again.

"Rosamund——"

The body in front of her moved to come towards her. Then she uttered the fearful cry which was heard by Mr. Darlington on his way home from the Deanery, and she fled from the body which had slain Robin.

That purely instinctive action was the beginning of Dion's punishment. A cry, the movement of a body, and everything which meant life to him, everything for which he had lived, was gone. But he followed Rosamund with a sort of blind obstinacy, driven as she was by instinct. Dimly he knew that he was a man who only merited compassion, all the compassion of the world. He had no horror of himself, but only a horror of that Fate to which mortals have to submit and which had overtaken him in a shining moment of happiness. The gun accident of which his little son had been the victim presented itself to his erring mind as a terrific stroke from above, or from beyond, falling equally upon father and child. He was not responsible for it. The start of a frightened pony, its sudden attempt to bolt, the pulling of a rein which had brought the animal against him just as he was lifting his gun to fire at a rising bird—what were these things? Only the clumsy machinery used by implacable Fate to bring about that which had been willed somewhere, far off in the dark and the distance.

He must tell Rosamund, he must tell Rosamund.

. . . . . .

Annie and the nurse came out to the edge of the broad path which ran along the front of the house and peered into the darkness. Annie was crying and holding on to the nurse, whose almost fierce determination faded as she confronted the mystery of the night which hid her master and mistress.

"H'sh, Annie," she whispered. "Where can they be? Listen, I tell you!"

Annie strove to choke down her sobs.

"I can hear—some one," whispered the nurse, after a moment. "Don't you? Listen, I tell you! Right over by the wall near the Bishop's!"

The sound of steps indeed came to them through the darkness. Annie broke away from the nurse.

"I'm frightened! I'm frightened! I don't know what's come to them," she whispered through her teeth, resisting the impulse to cry out. "Come in, Nurse, for God's sake!"

She shrank into the house. The nurse stood where she was for a moment, but when she heard the steps a little nearer to her she, too, was overcome by fear and followed Annie trembling, shutting the door behind her.

Exactly at half-past seven Mr. Darlington and Canon Wilton were outside the door of Little Cloisters and Mr. Darlington pulled the bell. Always the most discreet of men, he had not mentioned to his host the terrible cry he had heard in the Leiths' garden, or his short colloquy with Annie. He was seriously disturbed in mind, but, being a trained man of the world and one who prided himself upon his powers of self-control, he had concealed this unpleasant fact from the Canon, and had talked quite agreeably during their little walk between the two houses. The sound of that dreadful cry still seemed to shudder through his flesh, but it was not for him to pry into the private lives of others, even of those whom he knew intimately, and had a great regard for. He hoped all was well with his dear young friends. There might be some quite simple explanation of that cry. He fervently hoped there was. In any case it was not for him to ask questions, or to——

"They're a long while answering the bell," said Canon Wilton, in his strong, earnest voice. "Hadn't you better give it another tug, Darlington?"

Mr. Darlington started.

"H'm—ha!"

He raised his hand and pulled the bell a second time.

"That's better," said the Canon, as he heard inside the house a long tinkle. "Annie's bound to come now. As a rule she's very quick in answering the door. Among her many virtues, Mrs. Leith counts that of being a first-rate housewife. She trains her maids well."

"Does she?" murmured Mr. Darlington abstractedly, bending forward till he seemed almost to be listening at the door. "Does she? I hear some one coming. H'm!"

He straightened himself. The door opened and Annie appeared. When she saw the two men she drew back quickly to let them pass in. Canon Wilton said kindly: "Good evening, Annie."

"Oh, sir," said Annie, and began to cry audibly.

"What's the matter?" asked the Canon, surprised.

They were now in the little oak panelled hall, and by the light of the lamp they could see the tears running down the flushed face of the maid.

"Is anything wrong?" said the Canon.

"Oh, sir, I'm so glad you've come! Oh, we don't know what it is!"

At this moment Robin's nurse showed herself on the staircase.

"For God's sake, sir," she said, with trembling lips, "do go into the garden!"

"Why?" said Canon Wilton, in a loud, firm voice.

"Mr. and Mrs. Leith are both there, sir. They've been there this long time. Mr. Leith he's come back from the shooting without Master Robin. Oh, there's something wrong, sir, there's something wrong!"

"Stay here for a moment, Darlington," said the Canon, with a sudden, almost fiery, decision. "I'll go at once and see what's the matter."

But Mr. Darlington laid a bony hand on his friend's arm.

"I'll come with you, Wilton. I'm—I'm afraid it's something very bad."

He lowered his voice almost to a whisper in saying the last words.

The Canon formed "Why?" with his lips.

"Just now, as I was passing the garden here coming back from the Deanery, I heard a most dreadful cry. I thought at the time that it came from an animal, but—now——"

The Canon stared at him almost sternly.

"We'd better not waste time," he said. "I wish you'd gone in then."

And he turned brusquely. He had opened the door, and was about to step on to the broad path which divided the front of the house from the lawn, when he heard steps approaching swiftly on the gravel.

"Some one coming!" he said. "Stop where you are, Darlington. I believe it's . . ."

Before he could finish his sentence Rosamund came upon him out of the darkness. Her face was distorted, so distorted

that he scarcely recognized it. It seemed to have shrunk and sharpened, and it had the look of fierceness which is characteristic of the faces of starving people. She put out both her hands as she came up to him, pushed him with violence into the house, and followed him.

"Lock the door!" she whispered. "Lock it! Lock it!"

"But——"

Her voice rose. She seemed savage with fear.

"Lock it, I tell you!"

A long arm shot out and a bony hand turned the key in the door.

"It's the only thing to be done for the moment," said Mr. Darlington to the Canon. "She's mad with fear."

Both the maids had disappeared, terrified by the face of their mistress. Rosamund caught hold of the stair-rail and began to hurry upstairs, but Mr. Darlington followed her and seized her by the arm.

"Rosamund! Rosamund! What is it?"

She turned.

"I'm going to find Robin. That man's killed Robin! Keep him out! Keep him away from me!"

A dreadfully surreptitious expression made her face hideous. She leaned forward, nodding her head, and whispered in Mr. Darlington's ear:

"*You* keep him away from me while I find Robin. He's killed Robin!"

Her whole body began to shake. Mr. Darlington put one arm round her.

"But, Rosamund——"

Below, the handle of the door leading to the garden was turned, the door was shaken, and there came a knocking on the wood.

Then Mr. Darlington heard again the cry which had come to him that evening as he passed the garden of Little Cloisters. His arm dropped.

Rosamund went frantically up the stairs and disappeared on the dark landing above.

# BOOK IV

# THE UNKNOWN GOD

## CHAPTER I

IN June of the following year two young Englishmen, who were making a swift tour in the near East, were sitting one evening in a public garden at Pera. The west wind, which had been blowing all day, had gone down with the coming of night. The air was deliciously warm, but not sultry. The travellers had dined well, but not too well, and were ready to be happy, and to see in others the reflection of their own contented holiday mood. It was delightful to be "on the loose," without responsibilities, and with a visit to Brûsa to look forward to in the immediate future. They sat under the stars, sipped their coffee, listened to the absurd music played by a fifth-rate band in a garishly-lighted kiosk, and watched with interest the coming and going of the crowd of Turks and Perotes, with whom mingled from time to time foreign sailors from ships lying off the entrance to the Golden Horn and a few tourists from the hotels of Pera. Just behind them sat their guide, a thin and eager Levantine, half-Greek and half-Armenian, who, for some inscrutable reason, declared that his name was John.

There was little romance in this garden set in the midst of the noisy European quarter of Constantinople. The music was vulgar; Greek waiters with dissipated faces ran to and fro carrying syrups and liqueurs; corpulent Turks sat heavily over glasses of lager beer; overdressed young men of enigmatic appearance, with oily thick hair, shifty eyes, and hands covered with cheap rings, swaggered about smoking cigarettes and talking in loud, ostentatious voices. Some women were there, fat and garish for the most part, liberally powdered and painted, and crowned with hats at

which Paris would have stared almost in fear. There were also children, dark, even swarthy, with bold eyes, shrill voices, immodest bearing, who looked as if they had long since received the ugly freedom of the streets, and learned lessons no children ought to know.

Presently the band stopped playing and there was a general movement of the crowd. People got up from the little tables and began to disperse. "John" leaned forward to his employers, and in a quick and rattling voice informed them that a "fust-rate" variety entertainment was about to take place in another part of the garden. Would they come to see it? There would be very beautiful women, very fine girls such as can only be gazed on in Constantinople, taking part in the "show."

The young men agreed to "have a look at it," and followed John to a place where many round tables and chairs were set out before a ramshackle wooden barrack of a theatre, under the shade of some pepper trees, through whose tresses the stars peeped at a throng and a performance which must surely have surprised them.

The band, or a portion of it, was again at work, playing an inane melody, and upon the small stage two remarkably well-developed and aquiline-featured women of mature age, dressed as very young children in white socks, short skirts which displayed frilled drawers, and muslin bonnets adorned with floating blue and pink ribbons, swayed to and fro and joined their cracked voices in a duet, the French words of which seemed to exhale a sort of *fade* obscenity. While they swayed and jigged heavily, showing their muscular legs to the staring audience, they gazed eagerly about, seeking an admiration from which they might draw profit when their infantile task was over. Presently they retired, running skittishly, taking small leaps into the air, and aimlessly blowing kisses to the night.

"Very fine girls!" murmured John to his young patrons. "They make much money in Pera."

One of the young men shrugged his shoulders with a smile.

"Get us two Turkish coffees, John!" he said. Then he turned to his companion. "I say, Ellis, have you noticed an English feller—at least I take him to be English—who's sitting over there close to the stage, sideways to us?"

"No; where is he?" asked his companion.

"You see that old Turk with the double chin?"

"Rather."

"Just beyond him, sitting with a guide who's evidently Greek."

"I've got him."

"Watch him I never saw such a face."

A blowzy young woman, in orange colour and green, with short tinsel-covered skirts, bounded wearily on to the stage, smiling, and began to sing:

"Je suis une boîte de surprises!
O la la! O la la!
Je suis une boîte de surprises."

Ellis looked across at the man to whom his attention had been drawn. This man was seated by a little table on which were a siphon, a bottle of iced water, and a tall tumbler nearly half-full of a yellow liquid. He was smoking a large dark-coloured cigar which he now and then took from his mouth with a hand that was very thin and very brown. His face was dark and browned by the sun, but looked startlingly haggard, as if it were pale or even yellowish under the sun-burn. About the eyes there were large wrinkles, spraying downwards over the cheek bones and invading the cheeks. He wore a moustache, and was well-dressed in a tweed suit. But his low collar was not very fresh, and his tie was arranged in a slovenly fashion and let his collar stud be seen. He sat with his legs crossed, staring at the grimacing woman on the stage with a sort of horrible icy intentness. The expression about his lips and eyes was more than bitter; it showed a frozen fierceness.

On the other side of the table was seated a lean, meagre guide, obviously one of those Greeks who haunt the quays of Constantinople on the look out for arriving travellers. Now and then this Greek leaned forward and, with a sort of servile and anxious intelligence, spoke to his companion. He received no reply. The other man went on smoking and staring at the *boîte de surprises* as if he were alone. And somehow he seemed actually to be alone, encompassed by a frightful solitude.

"A tragic face, isn't it?" said the man who had first spoken.

"By Jove it is!" returned the other. "I wonder that woman can go on singing so close to it."

"Probably she hasn't seen him. How many years do you give him?"

"Thirty-eight or forty."

"He isn't out for pleasure, that's certain."

"Pleasure! One would suppose he'd been keeping house with Medusa and—the deuce, she's seen him!"

At this moment the singer looked towards the stranger, quavered' faltered, nearly broke down, then, as if with an effort, raised her voice more shrilly and defiantly, exaggerated her meaningless gestures and looked away. A moment later she finished her song and turned to strut off the stage. As she did so she shot a sort of fascinated glance at the dark man. He took his cigar from his mouth and puffed the smoke towards her, probably without knowing that he did so. With a startled jerk she bounded into the wings.

At this moment John returned with two cups of coffee.

"You know everything, John. Tell us who that man over there is," said Ellis, indicating the stranger.

John sent a devouring glance past the old Turk's double chin, a glance which, as it were, swallowed at one gulp the dark man, his guide, the siphon, the water-bottle and the glass partially full of the yellow liquid.

"I dunno him. He is noo."

"Is he English?"

"Sure!" returned John, almost with a sound of contempt.

He never made a mistake about any man's nationality, could even tell a Spanish Jew from a Portuguese Jew on a dark night at ten yards' distance.

"I tell you who he is later. I know the guide, a damned fool and a rogue of a Greek what has been in prison. He robs all his people what take him."

"You needn't bother," said Ellis curtly.

"Of course not. Shut up, John, and don't run down your brothers in crime."

"That man my brother!"

John upraised two filthy ringed hands.

"That dirty skunk my brother! That son of——"

"That'll do, John! Be quiet."

"To-morrow I tell you all about the gentleman. Here is another fine girl! I know her very well."

A languid lady, with a face painted as white as a wall, large scarlet lips, eyes ringed with bluish black, and a gleaming and trailing black gown which clung closely to her long and snake-like body, writhed on to the stage, looking carefully sinister.

The dark man swallowed his drink, got up and made his

way to the exit from the garden. He passed close to the two young men, followed by his Greek, at whom John cast a glance of scowling contempt, mingled, however, with very definite inquiry.

"By Jove! he's almost spoilt my evening," said Ellis. "But we made a mistake, Vernon. He isn't anything like forty."

"No; more like thirty under a cloud."

"By the look of things I should guess there are plenty of people under a cloud in Pera. But that English feller stands out even here. This girl is certainly a first-class wriggler, if she's nothing else."

They did not mention the stranger again that night. But John had not forgotten him, and when he arrived at their hotel next day he at once opened his capacious mouth and let out the following information:

"The gentleman's name is Denton, his other name is Mervyn, he is three days in Constantinople, he lives in Hughes's Hotel in Pera, a very poor house where chic people they never goes, he is out all day and always walkin', he will not take a carriage, and he is never tired, Nicholas Gounaris—the Greek guide—he is droppin' but the gentleman he does not mind, he only sayin' if you cannot walk find me another guide what can, every night he is out, too, and he is goin' to Stamboul when it is dark, he is afraid of nothin' and goin' where travellers they never go, one night Gounaris he had to show the traveller——"

But at this point Ellis shut John up.

"That'll do," he observed. "You're a diligent rascal, John. One must say that. But we aren't a couple of spies, and we don't want to hear any more about that feller."

And John, without bearing any malice, went off to complete his arrangements for the journey to Brûsa.

Two days later, Mrs. Clarke, who was at Buyukdereh in a villa she had taken for the summer months, but who had come into Constantinople to do some shopping, saw "Mervyn Denton" in a side street close to the British Embassy. Those distressed eyes of hers were very observant. There were many people in the street, and "Denton," who was alone, was several yards away from her, and was walking with his back towards her; but she immediately recognized him, quickened her steps till she was close to him, and then said:

"Dion Leith!"

Dion heard the husky voice and turned round. He did

not say anything, but he took off the soft hat he was wearing. Mrs. Clarke stared at him with the unself-conscious directness which was characteristic of her. She saw Dion for the first time since the tragedy which had changed his life, but she had written to him more than once. Her last letter had come from Buyukdereh. He had answered it, but he had not told her where he was, had not even hinted to her that he might come to Constantinople. Nevertheless, she did not now show any surprise. She just looked at him steadily, absorbed all the change in him swiftly, and addressed herself to the new man who stood there before her.

"Come with me to the Hôtel de Paris. I'm spending the night there, and go back to-morrow to Buyukdereh. I had something to do in town."

She had not given him her hand, and he did not attempt to take it. He put on his hat, turned and walked at her side. Neither of them spoke a word until they had come into the uproar of the Grande Rue, which surrounded them with a hideous privacy. Then Mrs. Clarke said:

"Where are you staying?"

"At Hughes's Hotel."

"I never heard of it."

"It's in Brûsa Street. It's cheap."

"And horrible," she thought.

But she did not say so.

"I have only been here three days," Dion added.

"Do you remember that I once said to you I knew you would come back to Constantinople?"

For a moment his face was distorted. When she saw that she looked away gravely, at the glittering shops and at the Perotes who were passing by with the slow and lounging walk which they affect in the Grande Rue. Presently she heard him say:

"You were right. It was all arranged. It was all planned out. Even then I believe I knew it would be so, that I should come back here."

"Why have you come?"

"I don't know," he answered, and his voice, which had been hard and fierce, became suddenly dull.

"He really believes that," she thought.

"Here is the hotel," she said. "I'm all alone. Jimmy has been out, but has had to go back to Eton. I wish you had seen him."

"Oh no!" said Dion, almost passionately.

They went up in a lift, worked by a Montenegrin boy with a big round forehead, to her sitting-room on the second floor. It was large, bare and clean, with white walls and awnings at the windows. She rang the bell. A Corsican waiter came and she ordered tea. The roar of the street noises penetrated into the shadowy room through the open windows, and came to Dion like heat. He remembered the silence of Claridge's. Suddenly his head began to swim. It seemed to him that his life, all of it that he had lived till that moment, was spinning round him, and that, as it spun, it gave out a deafening noise and glittered. He sat down on a chair which was close to a small table, laid his arms on the table, and hid his face against them. Still the deafening noise continued. The sum of it was surely made up of the uproar of the Grande Rue with the uproar of his spinning life added to it. He saw yellow balls ringed with pale blue rapidly receding from his shut eyes.

Mrs. Clarke looked at him for a moment; then she went into the adjoining bedroom and shut the door behind her. She did not come back till the waiter knocked and told her that tea was ready. Then she opened the door. She had taken off her hat and gloves, and looked very white and cool, and very composed.

Dion was standing up near the windows. The waiter, who had enormously thick moustaches, and who evidently shaved in the evening instead of in the morning, was going out at the farther door. He shut it rather loudly.

"Every one makes a noise in Pera. It's *de rigueur*," said Mrs. Clarke, coming to the tea-table.

"Do you know," said Dion, "I used to think *you* looked punished?"

"Punished—I!"

There was a sudden defiance in her voice which he had never heard in it before. He came up to the table.

"Yes. In London I used to think you had a punished look and even a haunted look. Wasn't that ridiculous? I didn't know then what it meant to be punished, or to be haunted. I hadn't enough imagination to know, not nearly enough. But some one or something's seen to it that I shall know all about punishment and haunting. So I shall never be absurd about you again."

After a pause she said:

"I wonder why you thought that about me?"

"I don't know. It just came into my head."

"Well, sit down and let us have our tea."

Dion sat down mechanically, and Mrs. Clarke poured out the tea.

"I wish it was Buyukdereh," she said.

"Oh, I like the uproar."

"No, you don't—you don't. Pera is spurious, and all its voices are spurious voices. To-morrow morning, before I go back, you and I will go to Eyub."

"To the dust and the silence and the cypresses—O God!" said Dion.

He got up from his chair. He was beginning to tremble. Was it coming upon him at last then, the utter breakdown which through all these months he had—somehow—kept at a distance? Determined not to shake, he exerted his will violently, till he felt as if he were with dreadful difficulty holding, keeping together, a multitude of living, struggling things which were trying to get away out of his grasp. And these living, struggling things were the multitudinous parts of the whole which was himself.

All that now was had been foreshadowed. There had been writing on the wall.

"I am grateful to you for several things. I'm not going to give you the list now. Some day, perhaps, I shall tell you what they are . . . among the cypresses of Eyub."

She had said that to him in London, and her voice had been fatalistic as she spoke; and in the street that same day, on his way home, the voice of the boy crying the last horror had sounded to him like a voice from the sea, a strange and sad cry lifted up between Europe and Asia. And now——

"How did you know?" he said. "How did you know that we should be here together some day?"

"Sit down. You must sit down."

She put her languid and imperative hand on his wrist, and he sat down. He took her hand and put it against his forehead for a moment. But that was no use. For her hand seemed to add fever to his fever.

"I have seen you standing amongst graves in the shadow of cypress trees," he said. "In England I saw you like that. But—how did you know?"

"Drink your tea. Don't hurry. We've got such a long time."

"I have. I have all the days and the nights—every hour of them—at my own disposal. I'm the freest man on earth, I suppose. No work, no ties."

"You've given up everything?"

"Oh, of course. That is, the things that were still left to me to give up. They didn't mean much."

"Eat something," she said, in a casual voice, pushing a plate of delicious little cakes towards him.

"Thank you."

He took one and ate. He had regained self-control, but he knew that at almost any moment, if anything unusual happened, or if he dared to think, or to talk, seriously about the horror of his life, he would probably go down with a crash into an abyss in which all of his manhood, every scrap of his personal dignity, would be utterly lost. And still almost blindly he held on to certain things in the blackness which encompassed him. He still wished to play the man, and though in bitterness he had tried sometimes to sink down in degradation, his body—or so it had seemed to him—had resisted the will of the injured soul, which had said to it, "Go down into the dirt; seek satisfaction there. Your sanity and your purity of life have availed you nothing. From them you have had no reward. Then seek the rewards of the other life. Thousands of men enjoy them. Join that crowd, and put all the anæmic absurdities of so-called goodness behind you."

He had almost come to hate the state he conceived of as goodness; yet the other thing, its opposite, evil, he instinctively rebelled against and even almost feared. The habit of a lifetime was not to be broken in a day, or even in many days. Often he had thought of himself as walking in nothingness, because he rejected evil.

Goodness had ruthlessly cast him out; and so far he had made no other friend, had taken no other comrade to his bruised and bleeding heart.

Mrs. Clarke began to talk to him quietly. She talked about herself, and he knew that she did this not because of egoism, but because delicately she wished to give him a full opportunity for recovery. She had seen just where he was, and she had understood his recoil from the abyss. Now she wished, perhaps, to help him to draw back farther from it, to draw back so far that he would no longer see it or be aware of it.

So she talked of herself, of her life at Buyukdereh in the summer, and in Pera in the autumn and spring.

"I don't go out to Buyukdereh till the middle of May," she said, "and I come back into town at the end of September."

"You manage to stand Pera for some months every year?" said Dion, listening at first with difficulty, and because he was making a determined effort.

"Yes. An Englishwoman—even a woman like me—can't live in Stamboul. And Pera, odious as it is, is in Constantinople, in the city which has a spell, though you mayn't feel it yet."

She was silent for a moment, and they heard the roar from the Grande Rue, that street which is surely the noisiest in all Europe. Hearing it, Dion thought of the silence of the Precincts at Welsley. That sweet silence had cast him out. Hell must be full of roaring noises and of intense activities. Then Mrs. Clarke went on talking. There was something very feminine and gently enticing in her voice, which resembled no other voice ever heard by Dion. He felt kindness at the back of her talk, the wish to alleviate his misery if only for a moment, to do what she could for him. She could do nothing, of course. Nevertheless he began to feel grateful to her. She was surely unlike other women, incapable of bearing a grudge. For he had not been very "nice" to her in the days when he was happy and she was in difficulties. At this moment he vaguely exaggerated his lack of "niceness," and perhaps also her pardoning temperament. In truth, he was desperately in need of a touch from the magic wand of sympathy. Believing, or even perhaps knowing, that to the incurably wounded man palliatives are of no lasting avail, he had deliberately fled from them, and gone among those who had no reason to bother about him. But now he was grateful.

"Go on talking," he said once, when she stopped speaking. And she continued talking about her life. She said nothing more about Jimmy.

The Corsican waiter came and took away the tea things noisily. Her spell was broken. For a moment Dion felt dazed.

He got up.

"I ought to go," he said.

"Must you?"

"Must I—Oh no! My time is my own, and always will be, I suppose."

"You have thrown up everything?"

"What else could I do? The man who killed his own son! How could I stay in London, go among business men who knew me, talk about investments to clients? Suppose you had killed Jimmy!"

There was a long silence. Then he said :

" I've given up my name. I call myself Mervyn Denton. I saw the name in a novel I opened on a railway bookstall."

She got up and came near to him quietly.

" This is all wrong," she said.

" What is ? "

" All you are doing, the way you are taking it all."

" What other way is there of taking such a thing ? "

" Will you come with me to Eyub to-morrow ? "

" It was written long ago that I am to go there with you. I'm quite sure of that."

" I'll tell you what I mean there to-morrow."

She looked towards the window.

" It's like the roar of hell," he said.

And he went away.

That night Mrs. Clarke dined alone downstairs in the restaurant. The cooking at the Hôtel de Paris was famous, and attracted many men from the Embassies. Presently Cyril Vane, one of the secretaries at the British Embassy, came in to dine. He had with him a young Turkish gentleman, who was called away by an agent from the Palace in the middle of dinner. Vane, left thus alone, presently got up and came to Mrs. Clarke's table.

" May I sit down and talk to you for a little ? " he said, with a manner that testified to their intimacy. " My guest has deserted me."

" Yes, do. Tell the waiter to bring the rest of your dinner here."

" But I have finished."

" Light your cigar then."

" If you don't mind."

They talked for a few minutes about the things of every day and the little world they both lived in on the Bosporus ; then Mrs. Clarke said :

" I met a friend from England unexpectedly to-day."

" Did you ? "

" A man called Dion Leith."

" Dion Leith ? " repeated Vane.

He looked at her earnestly.

" Now wait a moment ! "

His large, cool blue eyes became meditative.

" It's on the edge of my mind who that is, and yet I can't remember. I don't know him, but I'm sure I know of him."

" He fought in the South African War."

Suddenly Vane leaned forward. He was frowning.

"I've got it! He fought, came back with the D.C.M., and only a few days afterwards killed his only child, a son, out shooting. I remember the whole thing now, the inquest at which he was entirely exonerated, and the rumours about his wife. She's a beautiful woman, they say."

"Very beautiful."

"She took it very badly, didn't she?"

"What do you mean by very badly?"

"Didn't she bear very hard on him?"

"She couldn't endure to see him, or to have him near her. Is that very wonderful?"

"You stand up for her then?"

"She was first and foremost a mother."

"Do you know," Vane said rather dryly, "you are the only woman I never hear speak against other women. But when the whole thing was an accident?"

"We can't always be quite fair, or quite reasonable, when a terrible shock comes to us."

"It's a problem, a terrible problem of the affections," Vane said. "Had she loved her husband? Do you know?"

"I know that he loved her very much," said Mrs. Clarke. "He is here under an assumed name."

Vane looked openly surprised and even, for a moment, rather disdainful.

"But then——" He paused.

"Why did I give him away?"

"Well—yes."

"Because I wish to force him to face things fully and squarely. It's his only chance."

"Won't he be angry?"

"But I don't mind that."

"You've had a reason in telling me," said Vane quietly. "What is it?"

"Come up to my sitting-room. We'll have coffee there."

"Willingly. I feel your spell even when you're weaving it for another man's sake."

Mrs. Clarke did not reject the compliment. She only looked at Vane, and said:

"Come."

## CHAPTER II

IN the morning Mrs. Clarke sent a messenger to Hughes's Hotel asking Dion to meet her at the landing-place on the right of the Galata Bridge at a quarter to eleven.

"We will go to Eyub by caïque," she wrote, "and lunch at a Turkish café I know close to the mosque."

She drove to the bridge. When she came in sight of it she saw Dion standing on it alone, looking down on the crowded water-way. He was leaning on the railing, and his right cheek rested on the palm of his brown hand. Mrs. Clarke smiled faintly as she realized that this man who was waiting for her had evidently forgotten all about her.

She dismissed the carriage, paid the toll and walked on to the bridge. As usual there was a crowd of pedestrians passing to and fro from Galata to Stamboul and from Stamboul to Galata. She mingled with it, went up to Dion and stood near him without uttering a word. For perhaps two minutes she stood thus before he noticed her. Then he turned and sent her a hard, almost defiant glance before he recognized who his companion was.

"Oh, I didn't know it was—— Why didn't you speak? Is it time to go?—I meant to be at the landing."

He spoke like a man who had been a long way off, and who returned weary and almost dazed from that distance. He looked at his watch.

"Please forgive me for putting you to the trouble of coming to find me."

"You needn't ever ask me to forgive you for anything. Don't let us bother each other with all the silly little things that worry the fools. We've got beyond all that long ago. There's my caïque."

She made a signal with her hand. Two Albanians below saluted her.

"Shall we go at once? Or would you rather stay here a little longer?"

"Let us go. I was only looking at the water."

He turned and sent a long glance to Stamboul.

"Your city!" he said.

"I shall take you there."

For the first time that day he looked at her intimately, and his look said:

"Why do you trouble about me?"

They went down, got into the caïque, and were taken by the turmoil of the Golden Horn. Among the innumerable caïques, the steamboats, the craft of all kinds, they went out into the strong sunshine, guarded on the one hand by the crowding, discoloured houses of Galata rising to Pera, on the other hand by the wooden dwellings and the enormous mosques of Stamboul. The voices of life pursued them over the water and they sat in silence side by side. Dion made no social attempt to entertain his companion. Had she not just said to him that long ago they had gone beyond all the silly little things that worry the fools? In the midst of the fierce activity and the riot of noise which marks out the Golden Horn from all other water-ways, they travelled towards emptiness, silence, the desolation on the hill near the sacred place of the Turks, where each new Sultan is girded with the sword of Osman, and where the standard-bearer of the Prophet sleeps in the tomb that was seen in a vision.

In the strong heat of noon they left the caïque and walked slowly towards the hill which rises to the north-east, where the dark towers of the cypresses watch over the innumerable graves. Mrs. Clarke had put up a sun umbrella. Her face was protected by a thin white veil. She wore a linen dress, pale grey in colour, with white lines on it, and long loose gloves of suède. She looked extraordinarily thin. Her unshining, curiously colourless hair was partly covered by a small hat of burnt straw, turned sharply and decisively up on the left side and trimmed with a broad riband of old gold. Dion remembered that he had thought of her once as a vision seen in water. Now he was with her in the staring definite clearness of a land dried by the heats of summer and giving to them its dust. And she was at home in this aridity. In the dust he was aware of the definiteness of her. Since the blackness had overtaken him people had meant to him less than shadows gliding on a wall mean to a joyous man. Often he had observed them, even sharply and with a sort of obstinate persistence; he had been trying to force them to become real to him. Invariably he had failed in his effort. Mrs. Clarke was real to him as she walked in silence beside him, between the handsome railed-in mausoleums which line the empty roads from the water's edge almost to the mosque of the Conqueror. A banal phrase come to his lips, "You are in your element

here." But he held it back, remembering that they walked in the midst of dust.

Leaving the mosque they ascended the hill and passed the Tekkeh of the dancing dervishes. All around them were the Turkish graves with their leaning headstones, or their headstones fallen and lying prone in the light flaky earth above the smouldering corpses of the dead. Here and there tight bunches of flowers were placed upon the graves. Gaunt shadows from old cypresses fell over some of them, defining the sunlight. Below was the narrowing sea, the shallow north-west arm of the Golden Horn, which stretches to Kiathareh, where are the sweet waters of Europe, and to Kiahat Haneh.

"We'll sit here," said Mrs. Clarke presently.

And she sat down, with the folding ease almost of an Oriental, on the warm earth, and leaned against the fissured trunk of a cypress.

Casually she had seemed to choose the resting-place, but she had chosen it well. More times than she could count she had come to that exact place, had leaned against that cypress and looked down the Golden Horn to the divided city, one half of which she loved as she loved few things, one half of which she endured for the sake of the other.

"From here," she said to Dion, "I can feel Stamboul."

He had lain down near to her sideways and rested his cheek on his hand. The lower half of his body was in sunshine, but the cypress threw its shadow over his head and shoulders. As Mrs. Clarke spoke he looked down the Golden Horn to the Turkish city, and his eyes were held by the minarets of its mosques. Seldom had he looked at a minaret without thinking of prayer. He thought of prayer now, and then of his dead child, of the woman he had called wife, and of the end of his happiness. The thought came to him:

"I was kept safe in the midst of the dangers of war for a reason; and that reason was that I might go back to England and kill my son."

And yet every day men went up into those minarets and called upon other men to bow themselves and pray.

God is great. . . .

In the sunlit silence of the vast cemetery the wheels of Dion's life seemed for a moment to cease from revolving.

God is great—great in His power to inflict misery upon men. And so pray to Him! Mount upon the minarets, go up high, till you are taken by the blue, till, at evening, you

are nearer to the stars than other men, and pray to Him and proclaim His glory. For He is the repository of the power to cover you with misery as with a garment, and to lay you even with the dust. Pray then—pray! Unless the garment is upon you, unless the dust is already about you!

Dion lay on the warm earth and looked at the distant minarets, and smiled at the self-seeking slave-instinct in men, which men sought to glorify, to elevate into a virtue.

"Why are you smiling,?" said a husky voice above him.

He did not look up, but he answered:

"Because I was looking at those towers of prayer."

"The minarets."

She was silent for a few minutes; after a while she said:

"You remember the first time you met me?"

"Of course."

"I was in great difficulties then. They culminated in the scandal of my divorce case. Tell me, how did you think I faced all that trouble?"

"With marvellous courage."

"In what other way can thoroughbred people face an enemy? Suppose I had lost instead of won, suppose Jimmy had been taken from me, do you think it would have broken me?"

"I can't imagine anything breaking you," said Dion. "But I don't believe you ever pray."

"What has that to do with it?"

"I believe the people who pray are the potential cowards."

"Do you pray?"

"Not now. That's why I was smiling when I looked at the minarets. But I don't make a virtue of it. I have nothing to pray for."

"Well then, if you have put away prayer, that means you are going to rely on yourself."

"What for?"

"For all the sustaining you will need in the future. The people commonly called good think of God as something outside themselves to which they can apply in moments of fear, necessity and sorrow. If you have really got beyond that conception you must rely on yourself, find in yourself all you need."

"But I need nothing—you don't understand."

"You nearly told me yesterday."

"Perhaps if you hadn't gone out of the room I should have been obliged to tell you, but not because I wished to."

"I understood that. That is why I went out of the room and left you alone."

For the first time Dion looked up at her. She had lifted her veil, and her haggard, refined face was turned towards him.

"Thank you," he said.

At that moment he liked her as he had never liked her in the past.

"Can't you tell me now because you wish to?"

"Here among the graves?"

"Yes."

Again he looked at the distant minarets lifted towards the blue near the way of the sea. But he said nothing. She shut her sun umbrella, laid it on the ground beside her, pulled off her gloves and spread them out on her knees slowly. She seemed to be hesitating; for she looked down and for a moment she knitted her brows. Then she said:

"Tell me why you came to Constantinople."

"I couldn't."

"If I hadn't met you in the street by chance, would you have come to see me?"

"I don't think I should."

"And yet it was I who willed you to come here."

Dion did not seem surprised. There was something remote in him which perhaps could not draw near to such a simple commonplace feeling in that moment. He had gone out a long way, a very long way, from the simple ordinary emotions which come upon, or beset, normal men living normal lives.

"Did you?" he asked. "Why?"

"I thought I could do something for you. I began last night."

"What?"

"Doing something for you. I told an acquaintance of mine called Vane, who is attached to the British Embassy, that you were here."

A fierce flush came into Dion's face.

"I said you would probably come out to Buyukdereh," she continued, "and that I wanted to bring you to the summer Embassy and to introduce you to the Ambassador and Lady Ingleton."

Dion sat up and pressed his hands palm downwards on the ground.

"I shall not go. How could you say that I was here? You knew I had dropped my own name."

"I gave it back to you deliberately."

"I think that was very brutal of you," he said, in a low voice, tense with anger.

"You wanted to be very kind to me when I was in great difficulties. Circumstances got rather in the way. That doesn't matter. The intention was there, though you were too chivalrous to go very far in action."

"Chivalrous to whom?"

"To her."

His face went pale under its sunburn.

"What are you doing?" he said, in a voice that was almost terrible. "Where are you taking me?"

"Into the way you must walk in. Dion——"—even in calling him by his Christian name for the first time her voice sounded quite impersonal—"you've done nothing wrong. You have nothing, absolutely nothing, to be ashamed of. Kismet! We have to yield to fate. If you slink through the rest of your years on earth, if you get rid of your name and hide yourself away, you will be just a coward. But you aren't a coward, and you are not going to act like one. You must accept your fate. You must take it right into your heart bravely and proudly, or, if you can't do that, stoically. I should."

"If you had killed Jimmy?"

She was silent.

"If you had killed Jimmy?" he repeated, in a hard voice.

"I should never hide myself. I should always face things."

"You haven't had the blow I have had. I know I am not in fault. I know I have nothing to blame myself for. I wasn't even careless with my gun. If I had been I could never have forgiven myself. But I wasn't."

"It was the pony. I know. I read the account of the inquest. You were absolutely exonerated."

"Yes. The coroner and the jury expressed their deep sympathy with me," he said, with intense bitterness. "They realized how—how I loved my little boy. But the woman I loved more even than my boy, whom I had lived for ever since I first saw her—well, she didn't feel at all as the coroner and the jury did."

"Where is she? I hear now and then from Beatrice Daventry, but she never mentions her sister."

"She is in Liverpool doing religious work, I believe. She has given herself to religion."

"What does that mean exactly?"

"People give themselves to God, don't they, sometimes?"

"Do they?" said Mrs. Clarke, with her curious grave directness, which seemed untouched by irony.

"It seems a way out of—things. But she always had a tendency that way."

"Towards the religious life?"

"Yes. She always cared for God a great deal more than she cared for me. She cared for God and for Robin, and she seemed to be just beginning to care for me when I deprived her of Robin. Since than she has hated me."

He spoke quietly, sternly. All the emotion of which she had been conscious on the previous afternoon had left him.

"I didn't succeed in making her love me!" he continued. "I thought I had gained a good deal in South Africa. When I came back I felt I was starting again, and that I should carry things through. Robin felt the difference in me directly. He would have got to care for me very much, and I could have done a great deal for him when he had got older. But God didn't see things that way. He had planned it all out differently. When I was with her in Greece, one day I tore down a branch of wild olive and stripped the leaves from it. She saw me do it, and it distressed her very much. She had been dreaming over a child, and my action shattered her dream, I suppose. Women have dreams men can't quite understand—about children. She forgave me for that almost directly. She knew I would never have done anything to make her unhappy even for a moment, if I had thought. Now I have broken her life to pieces, and there's no question of forgiveness. If there were, I should not speak of her to you. We are absolutely parted for ever. She would take the hand of the most dreadful criminal rather than my hand. She has a horror of me. I'm the thing that's killed her child."

He looked down at the dilapidated graves, and then at the lonely water which seemed trying to hide itself away in the recesses of the bare land.

"That's how it is. Robin forgave me. He was alive for a moment—after, and I saw by his eyes he understood. Yes, he understood—he understood!"

Suddenly his body began to shake and his arms jerked convulsively. Instinctively, but quite quietly, Mrs. Clarke put out her hand as if she were going to lay hold of his right arm.

"No—don't!" he said. "Yesterday your hand made me worse."

She withdrew her hand. Her face did not change. She seemed wholly unconscious of any rudeness on his part.

"Let's move—let's walk!" he said.

He sprang up. When he was on his feet he regained control of his body.

"I don't know what's the matter with me," he said. "I'm not ill."

"My friend, it will have to come," she said, getting up too.

"What?"

But she did not reply.

"I've never been like this till now," he added vaguely.

She knew why, but she did not tell him. She was a woman who knew how to wait.

They wandered away through that cemetery above the Golden Horn, among the cypresses and the leaning and fallen tombstones. Now and then they saw veiled women pausing beside the graves with flowers in their hands, or fading among the cypress trunks into sunlit spaces beyond. Now and then they saw a man praying. Once they came to a tomb where children were sitting in a circle chanting the Koran with a sound like the sound of bees.

Before they went down to the Turkish café, which is close to the holy mosque, they stood for a long while together on the hillside, looking at distant Stamboul. The cupolas of the many mosques and the tall and speary minarets gave their Eastern message—that message which, even to Protestant men from the lands of the West, is as the thrilling sound of a still, small voice. And the voice will not be gainsaid; it whispers, "In the East thou shalt find me if thou hast not found me in the West."

"Why do you care for Stamboul so much?" Dion asked his companion. "I think you are utterly without religion. I may be wrong, but I think you are. And Stamboul is full of calls to prayer and of places for men to worship in."

"Oh, there is something," she answered. "There is the Unknown God."

"The Unknown God?" he repeated, with a sort of still bitterness.

"And His city is Stamboul—for me. When the *muezzin* calls I bow myself in ignorance. What *He* is, I don't know. All I know is that men cannot explain Him to me, or teach

me anything about Him. But Stamboul has lures for me. It is not only the city of many prayers, it is also the city of many forgetfulnesses. The old sages said, 'Eat not thy heart nor mourn the buried Past.' Stay here for a time, and learn to obey that command. Perhaps, eventually, Stamboul will help you."

"Nothing can help me," he answered.

They went down the hill by the Tekkeh of the Dancing Dervishes.

. . . . . .

Mrs. Clarke did not go back to her villa at Buyukdereh that day. It was already late in the afternoon when her caïque touched the wharf at the foot of the Galata bridge.

"I shall stay another night at the hotel," she said to Dion. "Will you drive up with me?"

He assented. When they reached the hotel he said:

"May I come in for a few minutes?"

"Of course."

When they were in the dim, rather bare room with the white walls, between which the fierce noises from the Grande Rue found a home, he said:

"I feel before I leave I must speak about what you did last night, the message you gave to Vane of our Embassy. I dare say you are right and that I ought to face things. But no one can judge for a man in my situation, a man who's had everything cut from under him. I haven't ended it. That proves I've got a remnant of something—you needn't call it strength—left in me. Since you've told my name, I'll take it back. Perhaps it was cowardly to give it up. I believe it was. Robin might think so, if he knew. And he may know things. But I can't meet casual people."

"I'm afraid I did what I did partly for myself," she said, taking off her little hat and laying it, with her gloves, on a table.

"For yourself? Why?"

"I'll explain to-morrow. I shall see you before I go. Come for me at ten, will you, and we'll drive to Stamboul. I'll tell you there."

"Please tell me now, if you're not tired after being out all day."

"I'm never tired."

"Once Mrs. Chetwinde told me that you were made of iron."

Mrs. Clarke sent him a curious keen glance of intense and almost lambent inquiry, but he did not notice it. The strong interest that notices things was absent from him. Would it ever be in him again ?

" I suppose I have a good deal of stamina," she said casually. " Well, sit down, and I'll try to explain."

She lit a cigarette and sat on a divan in the far corner of the large room, between one of the windows and the door which led into the bedroom. Dion sat down, facing her and the noise from the Grande Rue. He wondered for a moment why she had chosen a place so close to the window.

" I had a double reason for doing what I did," she said. " One part unselfish, the other not. I'll be very frank. I willed that you should come here."

" Why did you do that ? "

" I wanted to see you. I wanted to help you. You don't think I, or anyone, can do that. You think everything is over for you——"

" I know it is," he interrupted, in a voice which sounded cold and dull and final.

" You think that. Any man like you, in your situation, would think that. Let us leave it for the moment. I wished you to come here, and willed you to come here. For some reason you have come. You didn't let me know you were here, but, by chance as it seems, we met. I don't mean to lose sight of you. I intend that you shall come either to Buyukdereh, or to some place on the Bosporus not far off that's endurable in the summer, and that you shall stay there for a time."

" Why ? "

" I want to find out if I can be of any good to you."

" You can't. I don't even know why you wish to. But you can't."

" We'll leave that," she said, with inflexible composure. " I don't much care what you think about it. I shan't be governed, or affected even, by that. The point is, I mean you to come. How are you to come, surreptitiously or openly, sneaking in by-ways, your real name concealed, or treading the highway, your real name known ? For your own sake it must be openly and with your own name, and for my sake too. You need to face your great tragedy, to stand right up to it. It's your only chance. A man is always pursued by what he runs away from ; he can always make a friend of what he stands up to."

"A friend?"

His voice broke in with the most piercing and bitter irony through the many noises in the room—sounds of cries, of carriage wheels, of horses' hoofs ringing on an uneven pavement, of iron shutters being pulled violently down over shop fronts, of soldiers marching, of distant bugles calling, of guitars and mandolines accompanying a Neapolitan song.

"Yes, a friend," said the husky and inflexible, but very feminine voice, which resembled no other voice of woman that he had ever heard. "So much for my thought of you. And now for my thought of myself. I am a woman who has faced a great scandal and come out of it the winner. I was horribly attacked, and I succeeded in what the papers call re-establishing my reputation. You and I know very well what that means. I know by personal experience, you by the behaviour of your own wife."

Dion moved abruptly like a man in physical pain, but Mrs. Clarke continued:

"I don't ask you to forgive me for hurting you. You and I must be frank with each other, or we can be of no use to each other. After what has happened many women might be inclined to avoid me as your wife did. Fortunately I have so many friends who believe in me that I am in a fairly strong position. I don't want to weaken that position on account of Jimmy. Now, if you came to Buyukdereh under an assumed name, I couldn't introduce you to anyone, or explain you without telling lies. Gossip runs along the shores of the Bosporus like fire along a hayrick. How can I be seen perpetually with a man whom I never introduce to any of my friends, who isn't known at his own Embassy? Both for your own sake and for mine we must be frank about the whole thing."

"But I never said I should come to Buyukdereh," he said. And there was a sort of dull, lifeless obstinacy in his voice.

"You have come to Constantinople and you will come to Buyukdereh," she replied quietly.

He looked at her across the room. The light was beginning to fade, but still the awnings were drawn down beyond the windows, darkening the large bare room. He saw her as a study in grey and white, with colourless, unshining hair, a body so thin and flexible that it was difficult to believe it contained nerves like a network of steel and muscles capable of prolonged endurance, a face that was haggard in its white beauty, eyes that looked enormous and fixed in the

twilight. The whole aspect of her was melancholy and determined, beautiful and yet almost tragic. He felt upon him the listless yet imperative grasp which he had first known in Mrs. Chetwinde's drawing-room, the grasp which resembled Stamboul's.

"I suppose I shall go to Buyukdereh," he said slowly. "But I don't know why you wish it."

"I have always liked you."

"Yes, I think you have."

"I don't care to see a man such as you are destroyed by a good woman."

He got up.

"No one is destroying me," he said, with a dull and hopeless defiance.

"Dion, don't misunderstand me. It wouldn't be strange if you thought I bore your wife a grudge because she didn't care about knowing me. But, honestly, I am indifferent to a great many things that most women fuss about. I quite understood her reluctance. Directly I saw her I knew that she had ideals, and that she expected all those who were intimately in her life to live up to them. Instead of accepting the world as it has been created, such women must go one better than the Creator (if there is one), and invent an imaginary world. Now I shouldn't be at home in an imaginary world. I'm not good enough for that, and don't want to be. Your wife is very good, but she lives for herself, for her own virtues and the peace and happiness she gets out of them."

"She lived for Robin," he interrupted.

"Robin was part of herself," Mrs. Clarke said dryly. "Women like that don't know how to love as lovers, because they care for the virtues in men rather than for the men themselves. They are robed in ideals, and they are in mortal fear of a speck of dust falling on the robe. The dust of my scandal was upon me, so your wife avoided me. That I was innocent didn't matter. I had been mixed up with something ugly. Your chivalry was instinctively on the side of justice. Her virtue inclined to the other side. Her virtue is destructive."

He was silent.

"Now it has driven you out like a scapegoat into the wilderness!"

"No, no!" he muttered, without conviction.

"But don't let it destroy you. I would rather deliberately destroy myself than let anyone destroy me. In the one

case there's strength of a kind, in the other there's no strength at all. I speak very plainly, but I'm not a woman full of ideals. I accept the world just as it is, men just as they are. If a speck of dust alights on me, I don't think myself hopelessly befouled; and if some one I loved made a slip, I should only think that it is human to err and that it's humanity I love."

"Humanity!" he repeated, looking down. "Ah!" He sighed deeply.

He raised his head.

"And if some one you loved killed your Jimmy?"

"As you——?"

"Yes—yes?"

"I should love him all the more because of the misery added to him," she said firmly. "There's only one thing a really great love can't forgive."

"What is it?"

"The deliberate desire and intention to hurt it and degrade it."

"I never had that."

"No."

"Then—then you think she never loved me at all?"

But Mrs. Clarke did not answer that question.

The daylight was rapidly failing. She seemed almost to be fading away in the dimness and in the noises of evening which rose from the Grande Rue. Yet something of her remained and was very definite, so definite that even Dion, broken on the wheel and indifferent to casual influences as few men are ever indifferent, felt it almost powerfully—the concentration of her will, the unyielding determination of her mind, active and intense behind the pale mask of her physical body.

He turned away and went to the window farthest from her. He leaned out to the Grande Rue. Above his head was the sloping awning. It seemed to him to serve as a sounding-board to the fierce noises of the mongrel city.

"Start again!"

Surely among the voices of the city now filling his ears there was a husky voice which said that.

Had Mrs. Clarke spoken?

"Start again."

But not on the familiar road! To do that would be impossible. If there were indeed any new life for him it must be an utterly different life from any he had known.

He had tried the straight life of unselfishness, purity, fidelity and devotion—devotion to a woman and also to a manly ideal. That life had convulsively rejected him. Had he still within him sufficient energy of any kind to lay hold on a new life ?

For a moment he saw before him under the awning Robin's eyes as they had been when his little son was dying in his arms.

He drew back from the street. The sitting-room was empty, but the door between it and the bedroom was open. No doubt Mrs. Clarke had gone in there to put away her hat. As he looked at the door the Russian maid, whom he had seen at Park Side, Knightsbridge, came from the inner room.

"Madame hopes Monsieur will call to see her to-morrow before she starts to Buyukdereh," she said, with her strong foreign accent.

"Thank you," said Dion.

As he went out the maid shut the bedroom door.

## CHAPTER III

TWO days later Mrs. Clarke sat with the British Ambassadress in the British Palace at Therapia, a building of wood with balconies looking over the Bosporus. She was alone with Lady Ingleton in the latter's sitting-room, which was filled with curious Oriental things, with flowers, and with little dogs of the Pekinese breed, who lay about in various attitudes of contentment, looking serenely imbecile, and as if they were in danger of water on the brain.

Lady Ingleton was an old friend of Mrs. Clarke, and was a woman wholly indifferent to the prejudices which govern ordinary persons. She had spent the greater part of her life abroad, and looked like a weary Italian, though she was half English, a quarter Irish, and a quarter French. She was very dark, and had large, dreamy dark eyes which knew how to look bored, a low voice which could say very sharp things at times, and a languid manner which concealed more often than it betrayed an intelligence always on the alert.

"What is it, Cynthia ?" said Lady Ingleton. "But

first tell me if you like this Siné carpet. I found it in the bazaar last Thursday, and it cost the eyes out of my head. Carey, of course, has said for the hundredth time that I am ruining him, and bringing his red hair in sorrow to the tomb. Even if I am, it seems to me the carpet is worth it."

Mrs. Clarke studied the carpet for a moment with earnest attention. She even knelt down to look closely at it, and passed her hands over it gently, while Lady Ingleton watched her with a sort of dark and still admiration.

"It's a marvel," she said, getting up. "If you had let it go I should almost have despised you."

"Please tell that to Carey when he comes to you to complain. And now, what is it?"

"You remember several months ago the tragedy of a man called Dion Leith, who fought in the South African War, came home and almost immediately after his return killed his only son by mistake out shooting?"

"Yes. You knew him, I think you said. He was married to that beautiful Rosamund Everard who used to sing. I heard her once at Tippie Chetwinde's. Esmé Darlington was a great admirer of hers, of course *pour le bon motif*."

"Dion Leith's here."

"In Therapia?"

"No, in a hideous little hotel in Constantinople."

"Why?"

"I don't think he knows. His wife has given him up. She was a mother, not a lover, so you can imagine her feelings about the man who killed her child. It seems she was *une mère folle*. She has left him and, according to him, has given herself to God. He's in a most peculiar condition. He was a model husband, absolutely devoted and entirely irreproachable. Even before marriage I should think he had kept out of the way of—things. The athlete with ideals—he was that, one supposes."

"How extraordinarily attractive!" said Lady Ingleton, in a lazy and rather drawling voice.

"So he had a great deal to fasten on the woman who has cast him out. Just now, like the coffin of Mohammed, he's suspended. That's the impression I get from him."

"Do you want to bring him down to earth?"

"All he's known and cared for in life has failed him. He was travelling under an assumed name even, for fear people should point him out as the man who killed his own son. All that sort of thing is no use. I gave his secret away deliberately

to young Vane, and asked him to speak to the Ambassador. And now I've come to you. I want you to have him here once or twice and to be nice to him. Then I can see something of him, poor fellow, and do something for him."

A faint smile curved Lady Ingleton's sensitive lips.

"Of course. Then he's coming to the Bosporus?"

"He'll probably spend some time at Buyukdereh. He must face his fate and take up life again."

"He doesn't intend to do what his wife has done?"

Lady Ingleton was still smiling faintly.

"I should say his experience rather inclines him to take an opposite direction."

"Is he good-looking?"

"What he has been through has ravaged his face."

"That probably makes him much handsomer than he ever was before."

"He hates the thought of meeting anyone. But if you will have him here once or twice, and people know it, it will make things all right."

"Will he come?"

"Yes."

"You know I always do what you want."

"I never want you to do dull things."

"That's true. The dogs don't come into play against the people you bring here."

It was a legend in Constantinople in Embassy circles that Lady Ingleton always "set the dogs" at bores. Even at official dinners, when she had had as much as she could stand of the heavy bigwigs whom she was obliged to invite, she surreptitiously touched a bell. This was a signal to the footman to bring in the dogs, who were trained to yap at and to investigate closely visitors. The yapping and the investigations created a feeling of general restlessness and an almost inevitable movement, which invariably led to the speedy departure of the unwelcome guests; who went, as Lady Ingleton said, "not knowing why." Enough that they went! The dogs were rewarded with lumps of sugar as are the canine performers in a circus. Sir Carey complained that it was bad diplomacy, but he was devoted to his wife, and even secretly loved her characteristic selfishness.

"Let Dion Leith come and I'll cast my mantle over him—for your sake, Cynthia. You are a remarkable woman."

"Why?"

But Lady Ingleton did not say why. There were immense reticences between her and Cynthia Clarke.

Dion left Hughes's Hotel and went to Buyukdereh.

He did not consciously know why he did this. Until he met Mrs. Clarke near the British Embassy he had scarcely been aware how sordid and ugly and common under its small ostentations Hughes's Hotel was. She made him see the dreariness of his surroundings, although she had never seen them; she made him again aware of things. That she was able to affect him strongly, although he did not care for her, he knew by the sudden approach to the brink of a complete emotional breakdown which she had brought about in him at their first meeting. He remembered the hand he had taken and had put against his forehead. There had been no cool solace in it for the fever within him. Why, then, did he go to Buyukdereh? Certainly he did not go in hope. He was dwelling in a region far beyond any where hope can live.

But here was some one who was far away from the land that had seen his tragedy, and who meant something in connexion with him, who intended something which had to do with him. In England his mother had been powerless to help him; Beattie had been powerless to help him. Canon Wilton had tried to use his almost stern power of manly sincerity on behalf of the soul of Dion. He and Dion had had a long interview after the inquest on the little body of Robin was over, and he had drawn nearer to the inmost chamber than anyone else had, though Bruce Evelin, even in his almost fierce grief for Robin, had been wonderfully kind and understanding. But even Canon Wilton had utterly failed to be of any real use. Perhaps he had known Rosamund too well.

Till now Mrs. Clarke was the one human being who had succeeded in making a definite impression on Dion since Robin's death and Rosamund's fearful reception of the news of it. He felt her will, and perhaps he felt something else in her without telling himself that he did so: her knowledge of a life absolutely different from the life he had hitherto known, absolutely different, too, from the life known to, and lived by, those who had been nearest to him and with whom he had been most closely intimate. The old life with all its associations had cast him out. That was his feeling. Possibly, without being aware of it, and driven by the necessity that is within man to lay hold of something, to seek after refuge in the blackest moments of existence, he was feebly and in-

stinctively feeling after an unknown life which was represented to his imagination by the pale beauty of Mrs. Clarke. She had described his situation as one of suspension between the heaven and the earth. His heaven had certainly rejected him. Possibly, without knowing it, and without any hope of future happiness or even of future peace, he faintly descried her earth ; possibly, in going to Buyukdereh, he was making an unconscious effort to gain it.

He wondered about this afterwards, but not at all in the moment of his going. Things were not clear to him then. He was still in the vague, but he was not to walk in vagueness for ever. Fate which, by its malign action, had caused him to inflict a frightful injury upon the good woman he loved still held in reserve for him new and tremendous experiences. He thought that in Welsley he had reached the ultimate depths which a man can sound. It was not so.

Dion came to Buyukdereh on a breezy blue day, a day which seemed full of hope and elation, which was radiant with sunlight and dancing waters, and buoyant with ardent life. Gone were those delicate dreamy influences which sometimes float over the Bosporus even in the noontides of summer, when the winds are still, and the long shores of Asia seem to lie wrapped in a soft siesta, holding their secrets of the Orient closely hidden from the eyes of Europe. Europe gazes at Asia, but Asia is gravely indifferent to Europe ; she listens only to the voices which come to her from her own depths, and, like an Almeh reclining, is stirred only by music unknown to the West.

As the steamer on which he travelled voyaged towards the Black Sea, Dion paced up and down the deck and looked always at the shores of Asia. That line of hills represented to him the unknown. If he could only lose himself in Asia and forget ! But there was nothing passionate in his longing. It was only a grey desire born in a broken mind and a broken nature.

Once during the voyage he thought of Robin. Did Robin know where he was, whither he was going ? Since Rosamund had utterly rejected him, strangely his dead boy and he had at moments seemed to Dion to be near to each other encompassed by the same thick darkness. Even once he had seemed to see Robin groping, like one lost and vainly seeking after light. His vagueness was broken upon sometimes by fantastic visions. But to-day he had no consciousness at all of Robin. The veil of death which hung between him and the

child he had slain seemed to be of stone, absolutely impenetrable. And all his visions had left him.

Palaces and villas came into sight and vanished; Yildiz upon its hill scattered among the trees of its immense park; Dolmabaghcheh stretched out along the waters' edge, with its rose-beds before it, and its gravely staring sentinels; Beylerbey Serai on the Asian shore, with its marble quay and its terraced gardens, not far from Kandili and the sweet waters of Asia. Presently the Giant's Mountain appeared staring across the water at Buyukdereh. The prow of the steamer was headed for the European shore. Dion saw the bay opening to receive them under its wooded hills which are pierced by the great valley. It stretched its arms as if in welcome, and very calm was the water between them. Here the wind failed. Along the shore were villas, and gardens rising in terraces, where roses, lemon trees, laurels grew in almost rank abundance. Across the water came the soft sound of music, a song of Greece lifted above the thrumming of guitars. And something in the aspect of this Turkish haven, sheltered from the winds of that Black Sea which had come into sight off Kirech Burnu, something in the song which floated over the water, struck deep into Dion's heart. Abruptly he was released from his frozen detachment; tears sprang into his eyes, memories surged up in his mind—memories of a land not very far from this land; of the maidens of the Porch; of the hill of Drouva kept by the stars and the sleeping winds; of Zante dreaming in the sunset; of Hermes keeping watch over the child in the green recesses of Elis.

"Why do I come here? What have I to do here, or in any place dedicated to beauty and to peace?"

His brown face twitched, and the wrinkles which sprayed out from his eyelids over his thin cheeks worked till the network of them seemed to hold an independent and furious life.

"If I were a happy traveller as I once was!"

The thought pierced him, and was followed immediately by the remembrance of some words spoken by Mrs. Clarke:

"My friend, it will have to come."

That which had to come, would it come here, in this sheltered place, where the song died away like a thing enticed by the long valley to be kept by the amorous trees? Mrs. Clarke's voice had sounded full of inflexible knowledge when she had spoken those words, and she had looked at him with

eyes that were full of knowledge. It was as if those eyes had seen the weeping of many men.

The steamer drew near to the shore. The bright bustle of the quay was apparent. Dion made his effort and conquered himself. But he felt almost afraid of Buyukdereh. In the ugly roar of the Grande Rue he had surely been safer than he would be here in this place which seemed planned for intimate happiness.

The steamer came alongside the pier.

When Dion stepped on to the quay a tall young Englishman with broad shoulders, rather a baby face, and large intelligent blue eyes immediately walked up to him.

"Are you Mr. Dion Leith?"

Dion, startled, was about to say "No" with determined hostility when he remembered Mrs. Clarke. He had come here; he was, he supposed, going to stay here for some days at least; of course he must face things.

"Yes," he said gruffly.

In an easy, agreeable manner the stranger explained that he was Cyril Vane, second secretary of the British Embassy, and a friend of Mrs. Clarke's, and that he had come down at her request to meet Dion, and to tell him that there was a charming room reserved for him at the Belgrâd Hotel.

"I'll walk up with you if you like," he added, in a casual voice. "It's no distance. That your luggage?"

He put it in the charge of a porter from the hotel.

"I'm over at Therapia just now. The Ambassador hopes to see you. He's a delightful fellow."

He talked pleasantly, and looked remarkably unobservant till they reached the hotel, where he parted from Dion.

"I dare say I shall see you soon. Very glad to do anything I can for you. Mrs. Clarke lives at the Villa Hafiz. Anyone will tell you where it is."

He walked coolly away in the sun, looking like an immense fair baby in his thin, light-coloured clothes.

"Does he know?" thought Dion, looking after him.

Then he went up into his bedroom which looked out upon the sea. When the luggage had been brought in and the door was shut, he sat down on the edge of the bed and stared at the polished uncarpeted floor.

"Why have I come here? What have I to do here?" he thought.

He missed the uproar of Pera. It had exercised a species of pressure upon his soul, a deadening influence.

Ever since Robin's death he had lived in towns, and had walked about streets. He had been for a time in Paris, then in Marseilles, where he had stayed for more than two months haunted by an idea of crossing over to Africa and losing himself in the vastness of the lands of the sun. But something had held him back, perhaps a dread of the immense loneliness which would surely beset him on the other side of the sea; and he had gone to Geneva, then to Zurich, to Milan, Genoa, Naples, Berlin and Budapest. From Budapest he had come to Constantinople. He had known the loneliness of cities, but an instinct had led him to avoid the loneliness of the silent and solitary places. There had been an atmosphere of peace in quiet Welsley. He was afraid of such an atmosphere and had sought always its opposite.

"Why have I come here?" he thought again.

In this small place he felt exposed, almost as if he were naked and could be seen by strangers. In Pera at least he was covered.

"I shall have to go away from here," he thought.

He got up from the bed and began to unpack. As he did this the uselessness of what he was doing, the arid futility of every bit of the web of small details which, in their sum, were his life, flowed upon his soul like stagnant water forced into movement by some horrible machinery. He was like something agitating in a vast void, something whose incessant movements produced no effect, had no sort of relation to anything. In his loneliness of the cities he had begun to lose that self-respect which belongs to all happy Englishmen of his type. Mrs. Clarke had immediately noticed that certain details in his dress showed a beginning of neglect. Since he had met her he had rectified them, almost unconsciously. But now suddenly the burden of detail seemed unbearable.

It was only by an almost fierce exercise of the will that he forced himself to finish unpacking, and to lay his things out neatly in drawers and on the dressing-table. Then he took off his boots and his jacket, stretched himself out on the bed with his arms behind him and his hands grasping the bedstead, and shut his eyes.

There was something shameful in this flaccid idleness, in the aimlessness of his whole life now, devoid of all work, undirected towards any effort. But that was not his fault. He had worked with energy in business, with equal energy in play, worked for self's sake, for love's sake, and for country's sake. And for all he had done, for his effort of purity as a

boy and a youth, for his effort of love as a husband and a father, for his effort of valour as a soldier, he had been rewarded with the most horrible punishment which can fall upon a man. Effort, therefore, on his part was useless; it was worse than useless, it was grotesque. Let others make their efforts, his were done.

He wished that he could sleep.

. . . . . .

The dreadful inertia of Dion did not seem to be dreadful to Mrs. Clarke. Perhaps she was more intelligent than most women, and generated within herself so much energy of some kind that she was not driven to seek for it in others; or perhaps she was more sympathetic, more imaginative, than most women, and pardoned because she understood. At any rate, she accepted Dion as he was, and neither criticized him, attempted to bully him, nor seemed to wish to change him.

She had indeed insisted that he must face his fate and had ruthlessly given him back his name; she had also deliberately set about to entangle him in the silken cords of a social relation. But he knew within a couple of days of his arrival at Buyukdereh that he need not fear her. No woman perhaps ever lived who worried a man less in friendship, or who gave, without any insistence upon it, a stronger impression of loyalty, of tenacity in affection to those for whom she cared. Although often almost delicately blunt in words, in action she was full of tact. She was one of those rare women who absolutely understand men, and who know how to convey to men instantly the fact of their understanding. Such women are always attractive to men. Even if they are plain, and not otherwise specially clever, they possess for men a lure.

Mrs. Clarke had told Dion in Constantinople that she meant him to come to Buyukdereh. This was an almost insolent assertion of will-power. But when he was there she let him alone. On the day of his arrival there came no message from the Villa Hafiz to his hotel. He had, perhaps, expected one; he knew that he was relieved not to receive it. Late in the afternoon he went for a solitary walk up the valley, avoiding the many people who poured forth from the villas and hotels to take the air, as the sun sank low behind Therapia, and the light upon the water lost in glory and gained in magic. Gay parties embarked in caïques. Some people drove in small victorias drawn by spirited, quick-

trotting horses; others rode; others strolled up and down slowly by the edge of the sea. A gay brightness of sociable life made Buyukdereh intimately merry as evening drew on. Instinctively Dion left the laughter and the voices behind him.

His wandering led him to the valley of roses, where he sat down by a stream, and for the first time tasted something of the simplicity and charm of Turkish country life. It did not charm him, but in a dim way he felt it, was faintly aware of a soothing influence which touched him like a cool hand. For a long time he stayed there, and he thought, "If I remain at Buyukdereh I shall often visit this place beside the stream." Once he was disturbed by the noise of a cantering horse in the lane close by, but otherwise he was fortunate that day; few people came to his retreat, and none of them were foreigners. Two or three Turks strolled by, holding their beads; and once some veiled women came, escorted by a eunuch, threw some petals of flowers upon the surface of the tinkling water, and walked on up the narrow valley, chattering in childish voices, and laughing with a twitter that was like the twitter of birds.

In the soft darkness he walked slowly back to his hotel. And that night he slept better than he had ever slept in Pera.

On the following day there was still no message from the Villa Hafiz, and he did not see Mrs. Clarke. He took a row boat, with a big Albanian boatman for company, and rowed out on the Bosporus till they came in sight of the Black Sea. The wind got up; Dion stripped to his shirt and trousers, rolled his shirt sleeves up to the shoulders, and had a long pull at the oars. He rowed till the perspiration ran down his lean body. The boatman admired his muscles and his strength.

"Inglese?" he asked.

Dion nodded.

"Les Inglesi très forts, molto forte!" he observed, mixing French with Italian to show his linguistic accomplishments, "Moi très fort aussi."

Dion talked to the man. When he left the boat at the quay he said he would take it again on the morrow. The intention to go away from Buyukdereh, to drown himself again in the uproar of Pera, was already fading out of his mind. Mrs. Clarke's silence had, perhaps, reassured him. The Villa Hafiz did not summon him. He could seek it if he would. Evidently it was not going to seek him.

Again he felt grateful to Mrs. Clarke. Her silence, her neglect of him, increased his faith in her friendship for him.

His second day in Buyukdereh dawned ; in the late afternoon of it, now sure of his freedom, he went to the Villa Hafiz.

He did not know that Mrs. Clarke was rich. Indeed he had heard in London that she only had a small income, but that she " did wonders " with it. In London he had seen her at Claridge's and at the marvellous flat in Knightsbridge. Now, at Buyukdereh, he found her in a small, but beautifully arranged and furnished, villa with a lovely climbing garden behind it. Evidently she could not live in ugly surroundings or among cheap and unbeautiful things. He saw at a glance that the rugs and carpets on the polished floors of the villa were exquisite, that the furniture was not merely graceful and in place but really choice and valuable, and that the few ornaments and pieces of china scattered about, with the most deft decision as to the exactly right place for each mirror, bowl, vase and incense holder, were rarely fine. Yet in the airy rooms there was no dreary look of the museum. On the contrary, they had an intimate, almost a homely air, in spite of their beauty. Books and magazines were allowed their place, and on a grand piano, almost in the middle of the largest room, which opened by long windows into an adroitly tangled rose garden where a small fountain purred amongst blue lilies, there was a quantity of music. The whole house was strongly scented with flowers. Dion was greeted at its threshold by a wave of delicious perfume.

Mrs. Clarke received him in her most casual, most impersonal manner, and made no allusion to the fact that she knew he had already been for two days in Buyukdereh without coming near her. She asked him if his room at the hotel was all right, and when he thanked her for bothering about him said that Cyril Vane had seen to it.

" He's a kind, useful sort of boy," she added, " and often helps me with little things."

That day she said nothing about the Ambassador and Lady Ingleton, and showed no disposition to assume any proprietorship over Dion. She took him over the house, and also into the garden.

Upon the highest terrace of the latter, far above the house, between two magnificent cypresses, there stood a pavilion. It was made of the wood of the plane tree, was

painted dull green, had trees growing thickly at its back, and was partially concealed by a luxuriant creeper with deep orange-coloured flowers, not unlike orange-coloured jasmine, which Mrs. Clarke had seen first in Egypt and had acclimatized in Turkey. The centre of the front of this pavilion was open to the terrace, but could be closed by sliding doors which, when pushed back, fitted into the hollow walls on either side. The interior was furnished with bookcases, divans covered with cushions and embroideries, coffee tables, and Eastern rugs. Antique bronze lamps hung by chains from the painted ceiling, which was divided into lozenges alternately dull green and dull gold. The view from this detached library was very beautiful. Over the roof of the villa, beyond the broad white road and the quay, the long bay stretched out into the Bosporus. Across its tranquil waters, and the waters beaten up into waves by the winds from the Black Sea, rose the shores of Asia, Beikos, Anadoli Kavak, Anadoli Fanar, with lines of hills and the Giant's Mountain. Immediately below, and stretching away to right and left, were the curving shores of Europe, with the villas and palaces of Buyukdereh held between the blue sea and the tree-covered heights of Kabatash; the park of the Russian Palace, the summer home of Russia's representative at the Sublime Porte, gardens of many rich merchants of Constantinople and of Turkish, Greek and Armenian magnates, and the fertile and well-watered country extending to Therapia, Stania and Bebek on the one hand, and to Rumili Kavak, with the great Belgrâd forest behind it, and to Rumili Fanar, where the Bosporus flows into the Black Sea, on the other.

"Come up here whenever you like," Mrs. Clarke said to Dion. "You can ring at the side gate of the garden, and come up without entering the house or letting me know you are here. I have my own sitting-room on the first floor of the villa next to my bedroom, the little blue-and-green room I showed you just now. The books I'm reading at present are there. No one will bother you, and you won't bother anyone."

He thanked her, not very warmly, perhaps, but with a genuine attempt at real gratitude, and said he would come. They walked up and down the terrace for a little while, in silence for the most part. Before they went down he mentioned that he had been out rowing.

"I ride for exercise," said Mrs. Clarke. "You can easily

hire a good horse here, but I have one of my own, Selim. Nearly every afternoon I ride."

"Were you riding the day before yesterday?" Dion asked.

"Yes, in the Kesstâne Dereh, or Valley of Roses, as many people call it."

"Were you alone?"

"Yes."

Dion had thought of the cantering horse which he had heard in the lane as he sat beside the stream. He felt sure it was Selim he had heard. Mrs. Clarke did not ask the reason for his questions. She seemed to him a totally incurious woman. Presently they descended to the house, and he wished her good-bye. She did not ask him to stay any longer, did not propose any expedition, or any day or hour for another meeting. She just let him go with a grave, and almost abstracted good-bye.

When he was alone he realized something; she had assumed that he was going to make a long stay in Buyukdereh. Once, in speaking of the foliage, she had said, "You will notice in September——" Why was she so certain he would stay on? There was nothing to prevent him from going away by the steamer on the morrow. She did nothing to curb his freedom; she seemed almost indifferent to the fact of his presence there; yet she had told him he would come, and was evidently certain that he would stay.

He wondered a little, but only a little, about her will. Then his mind returned to an old haunt in which continually it wandered, obsessed by a horror that seemed already ancient, the walled garden at Welsley in which he had searched in the dark for a fleeing woman. Perpetually he heard the movement of that woman's dress as she disappeared into the darkness, and the sound of a door, the door of his own home, being locked against him to give her time to escape from him. That sound had cut his life in two. He saw, as he had seen many times in the past, the falling downwards of edges that bled, the edges of his severed life.

And he forgot the garden of the Villa Hafiz, the pavilion which stood on the hill looking over the sea to Asia, the grave woman who had told him, indifferently, that he could go to it when he would.

Nevertheless on the following day he found himself at the garden gate; he rang the bell; he was admitted by Osman, the placidly smiling gardener, and he ascended to the pavilion.

No one was there. He stayed for three hours, and nobody came to interrupt him. Down below the wooden villa held closely the secret of its life. Once, as he gazed down on it, he wondered for a moment about Mrs. Clarke, how she passed her hours without a companion, what she was doing just then. The siren of a steamer sounded in the bay. He went into the pavilion. On one of the coffee-tables he found lying a small thin book bound in white vellum. He took it up and read the name in gold letters: "The Kasîdah of Haji Abdû El-Yezdî." It was the book he had found Beattie reading on the night when Robin was born, on the night when Bruce Evelin and Guy had discussed Mrs. Clarke's divorce case and Mrs. Clarke. He shuddered in the warmth of the pavilion. Then resolutely he picked the book up. At the beginning, after some blank pages, there was a portrait of Sir Richard Burton. Dion looked at the strong, tragic face, with its burning expression, for a long time. Then he stretched himself on one of the divans and began to read the book.

Down below, in the villa, Mrs. Clarke was sitting in the green-and-blue room on the first floor with Lady Ingleton, and they were talking about Dion.

"He's here now," said Mrs. Clarke to her friend.

"Where?"

"In the garden. I haven't seen him, but Osman tells me he has gone up to the pavilion."

"We can stroll up there later on, and then you can introduce him if you want to."

"No."

Lady Ingleton did not look surprised on receiving this brusque negative.

"Shall I get Carey to see him first?" she asked, in her lazy voice. "Cyril Vane has prepared the way before him, and Carey is all sympathy and readiness to do what he can. The Greek tragedy of the situation appeals to him tremendously, and of course he has a hundredfold more tact than I have."

"Mr. Leith must go to the Embassy. But what he has been through has developed in him a sort of wildness that is almost like that of an animal. If he saw an outstretched hand he would probably bolt."

"And yet he's sitting in your pavilion."

"Because he knows he won't see any outstretched hand there. He was here for two days without coming near me, and even then he only came because I had taken no notice of him."

"I know. You spread the food outside, go indoors and close the shutters, and then, when no one is looking, it creeps up, takes the food, and vanishes."

"A very great grief eats away the conventions, and beneath the conventions there is always something strongly animal."

For a moment Lady Ingleton looked at Mrs. Clarke and was silent. Then she said, very quietly and simply :

"Does he realize yet how cruel you are ? "

"He isn't thinking about me."

"But he will."

Mrs. Clarke stared at the wall for a minute. Then she said :

"Ask the Ambassador if he will ride with me to-morrow afternoon, will you, unless he's engaged ? "

"At what time ? "

"Half-past four. Perhaps he'll dine afterwards."

"Very well. And now I'm going up to the pavilion."

But she did not go, although she was genuinely curious about the man who had killed his son and had been cast out by the woman he loved. Secretly Lady Ingleton was much more softly romantic than Mrs. Clarke was. She was hard on bores, and floated in an atmosphere of delicate selfishness, but she could be very kind if her imagination was roused, and though almost strangely devoid of prejudices she had instincts that were not unsound.

That evening she gave Mrs. Clarke's message to her husband.

"To-morrow—to-morrow ? " he said, in his light tenor voice, inquiringly. "Yes, I can go. As it happens, I'm breakfasting with Borinsky at the Russian Palace, so I shall be on the spot. John can meet me with Freddie."

Freddie was the Ambassador's favourite horse.

"But can Borinsky put up with you till half-past four ? "

"Cynthia Clarke won't mind if I turn up before my time."

"No. She's devoted to you, and you know it, and love it."

Sir Carey smiled. He and his wife were happy people, and he never wished to stray from his path of happiness, not even with Mrs. Clarke. But he had been a beautiful youth, whom many women had loved, and was a remarkably handsome man, although his red hair was turning grey. Honestly he liked to be admired by women, and to feel that his fascination for them was still intact. And he did not

actively object to the fact of his wife's being aware of it. For he loved her very much, and he knew that a woman does not love a man less because other women feel his power.

He appreciated Mrs. Clarke, and thought her full of intelligence, of nuances, and *très fine*. Her husband had been his right-hand man at the Embassy, but he had taken Mrs. Clarke's part when the divorce proceedings were initiated, and had stood up for her ever since. Like Esmé Darlington he believed that she was a wild mind in an innocent body.

On the following day he rode with her towards Rumili Kavak, and presently, returning, to the four cross-roads at the mouth of the Valley of Roses. A Turkish youth was standing there. Mrs. Clarke spoke to him in Turkish and he replied. She turned to the Ambassador.

"You do want a cup of coffee, don't you?"

"If you tell me I do."

"By the stream just beyond the lane. And I'll ride home. I've ordered all the things you like best for dinner. Ahmed Bey and Madame Davroulos will make a four."

"And Delia and Cyril Vane a two!"

"You must try to control your very natural jealousy."

"I will."

He dismounted and gave the reins to the Turkish youth.

Sitting very erect on her black Arab horse, Mrs. Clarke watched him disappear down the lane in which Dion had heard the cantering feet of a horse as he sat alone beside the stream.

Then she rode back to Buyukdereh.

## CHAPTER IV

WHETHER Mrs. Clarke had put "The Kasîdah" in a conspicuous place in the pavilion with a definite object, or whether she had been reading it and by chance had laid it down, Dion could not tell. He believed, however, that she had intended that this book should be read by him at this crisis in his life. She had frankly acknowledged that she wished to rouse him out of his inertia; she was a very mental woman; a book was a weapon that such a woman would be likely to employ.

At any rate, Dion felt her influence in "The Kasîdah."

The book took possession of him; it burnt him like a flame; even it made him for a short time forget. That was incredible, yet it was the fact.

It was an antichristian book. A woman's love of God had made Dion in his bitterness antichristian. It was an enormously vital book, and called to the vitality which misery had not killed within him. There were passages in it which seemed to have been written specially for him—passages that went into him like a sword and drew blood from out of the very depths of him.

"Better the worm of Izrail than Death that walks in form of life"—that was for him. He had substituted for death, swift, easy, a mere nothing, the long, slow, terrific something, Death that walks in form of life. Deliberately he had chosen that.

> "On thought itself feed not thy thought; nor turn
> From Sun and Light to gaze
> At darkling cloisters paved with tombs where rot
> The bones of bygone days——"

What else had he done since he had wandered in the wilderness?

> "There is no Good, there is no Bad, these be
> The whims of mortal will:
> What works me weal that call I 'good,' what harms
> And hurts I hold as 'ill.'"

Those words drove out the pale Fantasy he had fallen down and worshipped. It had harmed and hurt him. Haji Abdû El-Yezdî bade him henceforth hold it as "ill." If he could only do that, would not gates open before him, would not, perhaps, the power to live again in a new way arise within him?

> "Do what thy Manhood bids thee do, from
> None but self expect applause;
> He noblest lives and noblest dies who makes
> And keeps his self-made laws.
>
> All other Life is living Death, a world where
> None but Phantoms dwell,
> A breath, a wind, a sound, a voice, a tinkling
> Of the Camel bell."

He had lived the other life, for he had lived for another; he had lived to earn the applause of affection from Rosamund;

he had striven always to fit his life into her pattern; now he was alone with the result.

"Pluck the old woman from thy breast: be
Stout in woe, be stark in weal—
. . . . . spurn
Bribe of Heav'n and threat of Hell."

He had chosen the death that walks in form of life; now something powerful, stirred from sleep by the influence of a dead thinker wedded, perhaps, with the influence of one not dead, rose up in him to reject that death. And it was the same thing which long ago had enabled him to be pure before his marriage, the same thing which had enabled him to put England before even Rosamund, the same thing which had held him up in many difficult days in South Africa, and had kept him cheerful and bravely gay through the long separation from all he cared for, the same thing which had begun to dominate Rosamund during those few short days at Welsley, the brief period of reunion in happiness which had preceded the crash into the abyss; it was the fiery spark of Dion's strength which not all his weakness had succeeded in extinguishing, a strength which had made for good in the past, a strength which might make for evil in the future.

Did Mrs. Clarke know of that strength, and was she subtly appealing to it?

"Pluck the old woman from thy breast."

Again and again Dion repeated those words to himself, and he saw himself, an ineffably tragic, because a weak figure, feebly drifting with his black misery through cities which knew him not, wandering alone, sitting alone, peering at the lives of others, watching their vices without interest, without either approval or condemnation, staring with dull eyes at their fêtes and their funerals, their affections, their cruelties, their passions, their crimes. He saw himself in a garden at Pera staring at painted women, neither desiring them nor turning from them with any disgust. He saw himself—as an old woman. A smouldering defiance within him sent out a spurt of scorching flame.

. . . . . .

Sitting alone by the stream in the Valley of Roses Dion heard the sound of steps, and presently saw a slight, very refined-looking man in riding-breeches, with a hunting-crop in his hand, coming down to the bank. He sat down on a rough wooden bench under a willow tree, lit a cigar and gazed

into the water. He had large, imaginative grey eyes. There was something military and something poetic in his manner and bearing and in his whole appearance. Almost directly from a little rustic café close by a Greek lad came, carrying a wooden stool. On it he placed a steaming brass coffee pot, a cup and saucer, sugar, a stick of burning incense in a tiny vase, and a rose with a long stalk. Then he went swiftly away, looking very intelligent. The stranger—obviously an Englishman—picked up the rose, held it, smelt it, laid it down and began to sip his coffee. Then in a very casual, easy-going way, like a man who was naturally sociable, and who enjoyed having a word with anyone whom he came across, he began to speak to Dion.

When that day died Dion stood alone looking down into the stream. He looked till he saw in it the face of night. Broken stars quivered in the water; among them for a moment he perceived the eyes of a child, of a child who had been able to love him as a woman had not been able to love him, and to forgive him as a woman could not forgive him.

When Dion walked back to his hotel the candlelight glimmered over the dining-table at the Villa Hafiz where Mrs. Clarke sat with her three guests—the Ambassador, Madame Davroulos, the wife of a Greek millionaire whose home was at Smyrna, and Ahmed Bey, one of the Sultan's adjutants.

Hadi Bey had long ago passed out of her life.

That evening the Ambassador got up to go rather early. His caïque was lying against the quay.

"Come out by the garden gate, won't you?" said Mrs. Clarke to him, and she led the way to the tangled rose garden, where sometimes she sat and read the poems of Hafiz.

Madame Davroulos was smoking a large cigar in a corner of the drawing-room and talking volubly to Ahmed Bey, who was listening as only a Turk can listen, with a smiling and immense serenity, twisting a string of amber beads in his padded fingers.

"He was there?" said Mrs. Clarke, in her quietest and most impersonal manner.

"Yes—he was there."

The Ambassador paused by the fountain, and stood with one foot on the marble edge of the basin, gazing down on the blue lilies whose colour looked dull and almost black in the night.

"He was there. I talked with him for quite half an hour. He seemed glad to talk; he talked almost fiercely."

Mrs. Clarke's white face looked faintly surprised.

"Eventually I told him who I was, and he told his name to me, watching me narrowly to see how I should take it. My air of complete serenity over the revelation seemed to reassure him. I said I knew he was a friend of yours and that my wife and I would be very glad to see him at Therapia, and at the Embassy in Pera later on. He said he would come to Therapia to-morrow."

This time Mrs. Clarke looked almost strongly surprised.

"What did you talk about?" she asked.

"Chiefly about a book he seems to have been reading recently, Richard Burton's 'Kasîdah.' You know it, of course?"

"I remember Omar Khayyám much better."

"He spoke strangely, almost terribly about it. Perhaps you know how converts to Roman Catholicism talk in the early days of their conversion, as if they alone understood the true meaning of being safe in sunlight, cradled and cherished in the blaze, as it were. Well, he spoke like one just converted to a belief in the all-sufficiency of this life if it is thoroughly lived; and, I confess, he gave me the impression of being cradled and cherished in thick darkness."

Sir Carey was silent for a moment. Then he said:

"What was this man, Leith?"

"Do you mean——?"

"Before his married life came to an end?"

"The straight, athletic, orthodox young Englishman; very sane and simple; healthily moral; not perhaps particularly religious, but full of sentiment and trust in a boyish sort of way. I remember he read Christian morals into Greek art."

Sir Carey raised his eyebrows.

"One could sum him up by saying that he absolutely believed in and exclusively adored a strongly religious, beautiful, healthy-minded and healthy-bodied Englishwoman, who has now, I believe, entered a sisterhood, or something of the kind. She coloured his whole life. He saw life through her eyes and believed through her faith. At least, I should think so."

"Then he's an absolutely different man from what he was."

"The strongly religious, beautiful, healthy-minded and bodied Englishwoman has condemned as a crime a mere terrible mistake. She has taken herself away from her husband and given herself to God. She cared for the child."

Mrs. Clarke laid a curious cold emphasis on the last sentence.

"Horrible!" said Sir Carey slowly. "And so now he turns from the Protestant's God to Destiny playing with the pawns upon the great chessboard. But if he's a man of sentiment, and not an intellectual, he'll never find this life all-sufficient, however he lives it. The darkness will never be enough for him."

"It has to be enough for a great many of us," said Mrs. Clarke.

There was a long pause, which she broke by saying, in a lighter voice:

"As he's going to visit you, I can go on having him here. You'll let people know, won't you?"

"That he's a friend of ours? Of course."

"That will make things all right."

"You run your unconventionalities always on the public race-course, in sight of the grand stand packed with the conventionalities."

"What else can I do? Besides, secret things are always found out."

"You never went in for them."

"And yet my own husband misunderstood me."

"Poor Beadon! He was an excellent councillor."

"And an excellent husband."

"But he made a great fool of himself."

"Yes," said Mrs. Clarke, without any animus. "And so Mr. Leith made a sad impression upon you?"

"A few men can be tormented. He is one of them. He has gone down into the dark places. Perhaps the Furies are with him there, the attendants of the Goddess of Death."

He glanced at his companion. She was standing absolutely still, gazing down into the water. Her white face looked beautiful, but strangely haggard and implacable in the night. And for a moment his mind dwelt on the image conjured up by his last words, and he thought of her as the Goddess of Death.

"Well," he said, "I must go, or Delia will be wondering. She knows your power."

"And knows I am too faithful to her not to resist yours."

He pressed her hand, then said rather abruptly:

"Are you feverish to-night?"

"No," said Mrs. Clarke, almost with the hint of a sudden irritation. "I am never feverish."

Sir Carey went away to his caïque.

When he had gone Mrs. Clarke stood alone by the fountain for a moment, frowning, and with her thin lips closely compressed, almost, indeed, pinched together. She gazed down at her hands. They were lovely hands, small, sensitive, refined ; they looked clever, too, not like tapering fools. She knew very well how lovely they were, yet now she looked at them with a certain distaste. Betraying hands ! Abruptly she extended them towards the fountain, and let the cool silver of the water spray over them. And as she watched the spray she thought of the wrinkles about Dion's eyes.

" Ah, ma chère, qu'est-ce que vous faites là toute seule ? Vous prenez un bain ? "

The powerful contralto of Madame Davroulos flowed out from the drawing-room, and her alluring moustache appeared at the lighted French windows.

Mrs. Clarke dried her hands with a minute handkerchief, and, without troubling about an explanation, turned away from the rose garden. But when her two guests were gone she told her Greek butler to bring out an arm-chair and a foot-stool, and the Russian maid, whom Dion had seen, to bring her a silk wrap. Then she sent them both to bed, lit a cigarette and sat down by the fountain, smoking cigarette after cigarette quickly. Not till the freshness of dawn was in the air, and a curious living greyness made the tangled rose bushes look artificial and the fountain strangely cold, did she get up to go to bed.

She looked very tired ; but she always looked tired, although she scarcely knew what physical fatigue was. The grey of dawn grew about her and emphasized her peculiar pallor, the shadows beneath her large eyes, the haunted look about her cheeks and her temples.

As she went into the house she pulled cruelly at a rose bush. A white rose came away from its stalk in her hand. She crushed its petals and flung them away on the sill of the window.

While Mrs. Clarke was sitting by the fountain in the garden of the Villa Hafiz, Dion was sleepless in his bedroom at the Hôtel Belgrâd. He was considering whether he should end his life or whether he should change the way of his life. He was not conscious of struggle. He did not feel excited. But he did feel determined. The strength he possessed was asserting itself. It had slumbered within him ; it had not died.

Either he would die now or he would genuinely live, would lay a grip on life somehow.

If he chose to die how would Mrs. Clarke take the news of his death? He imagined some one going to the Villa Hafiz from the Hôtel Belgrâd with a message: "The English gentleman Mr. Vane took the room for has just killed himself. What is to be done with the body?" What would Mrs. Clarke say? What would she look like? What would she do? He remembered the sign of the cross she had made in the flat in Knightsbridge. With that sign she had dismissed the soul of Brayfield into the eternities. Would she dismiss the soul of Dion Leith with the sign of the cross?

If she heard of his death, Rosamund would of course be unmoved, or would, perhaps, feel a sense of relief. And doubtless she would offer up to God a prayer in which his name would be mentioned. Women who loved God were always ready with a prayer. If it came too late, never mind! It was a prayer, and therefore an act acceptable to God.

But Mrs. Clarke? Certainly she would not pray about it. Dion had a feeling that she would be angry. He had never seen her angry, but he felt sure she could be enraged in a frozen, still, terrible way. If he died perhaps a thread would snap, the thread of her design. For she had some purpose in connexion with him. She had willed him to come to this place; she was willing him to remain in it. Apparently she wished to raise him out of the dust. He thought of Eyub, of Mrs. Clarke walking beside him on the dusty road. She had seemed very much at home in the dust. But she was not like Rosamund; she was not afraid of a speck of dust falling upon the robe of her ideals. What was Mrs. Clarke's purpose in connexion with him? He did not pursue that question, but dismissed it, incurious still in his misery, which had become more active since his strength had stirred out of sleep. If he did not die how was he going to live? He had lived by the affections. Could he live by the lusts? He had no personal ambitions; he had no avarice to prompt him to energy; he was not in love with himself. Suddenly he realized the value of egoism to the egoist, and that he was very poor because he was really not an egoist by nature. If he had been, if he were, perhaps things would have gone better for him in the past, would be more endurable now. But he had lived not to himself but to another.

He told himself that to do that was the rankest folly. At any rate he would never do that again. But the unselfish-

ness of love had become a habit with him. Even in his extreme youth he had instinctively saved up, moved, no doubt, by an inherent desire to have as large a gift as possible ready when the moment for giving came.

If he lived on he must live for himself; he must reverse all his rules of conduct; he must fling himself into the life of self-gratification. He had come to believe that the men who trample are the men who succeed and who have the happiest lives. Sensitiveness does not pay; loving consideration of others brings no real reward; men do not get what they give. It is the hard and the passionate man who is the victor in life, not the man who is tender, thoughtful, even unselfish in the midst of his passion. Self-control—what a reward Dion had received for the self-control of his youth!

If he lived he would cast it away.

He sat at his window till dawn, till the sea woke and the hills of Asia were visible under a clear and delicate sky. He leaned out and felt the atmosphere of beginning that is peculiar to the first hour of daylight. Could he begin again? It seemed impossible. Yet now he felt he could not deprive himself of life. Suicide is a cowardly act, even though a certain kind of courage must prompt the pulling of the trigger, the insertion of the knife, or the pouring between the lips of the poison. Dion had not the courage of that cowardice, or the cowardice of that courage. Perhaps, without knowing it, in deciding to live he was only taking one more step on the road whose beginning he had seen in Elis, as he waited alone outside of the house where Hermes watched over the child; was saving the distant Rosamund from a stroke which would pierce through her armour even though she knelt before the throne of God. But he was conscious only of the feeling that he could not kill himself, though he did not know why he could not. The capacity for suicide evidently was not contained in his nature. He rejected the worm of Izrail; he rejected, too, the other death. He must, then, live.

He washed and lay down on his bed. And directly he lay down he wondered why he had been sitting up and mentally debating a great question. For in the Valley of Roses he had surely decided it before he spoke to Sir Carey Ingleton. When he said he would visit Lady Ingleton he must have decided. That visit would mean the return to what is called normal life, the exit from the existence of a castaway, the entrance into relations with his kind. He dreaded that visit,

but he meant to pay it. In paying it he would take his first step away from the death that walks in form of life.

He could not sleep, and soon he got up again and went to the window. A gust of wind came to him from the sea. It seemed to hint at a land that was cold, and he thought of Russia, and then again of the distant places in which he might lose himself, places in which no one would know who he was, or trouble about the past events of his life. There before him was Asia rising out of the dawn. He had only to cross a narrow bit of sea and a continent was ready to receive him and to hide him. So he had thought of Africa on many a night as he sat in the Hôtel des Colonies at Marseilles. But he had not crossed to Africa.

The wind died away. It had only been a capricious gust, a wandering guest of the morning. Down below in the Bay of Buyukdereh the waters were quiet; the row boats lay still at the edge of the quay; the small yachts, with their sails furled, slept at their moorings. The wind had been like a summons, a sudden tug at him as of a hand saying, with its bones, its muscles, its nerves, its sinews, "Come with me!"

Once before he had felt something like that in a London Divorce Court, but it had been fainter, subtler and perhaps warmer. The memory of his curiosity about the unwise life returned to him, somehow linked with the wandering wind. In his months of the living death he had often looked on at it in the cities through which he had drifted, but he had never taken part in it. He had been emptied of the force to do that by his misery. Now he was conscious of force though his misery was not lessened, seemed to him even to have increased. He had often been dulled by grief; now he felt cruelly alive.

He went down to the sea, found the Albanian boatman with whom he had rowed on his first day at Buyukdereh, took his boat out and bathed from it. The current beyond the bay was strong. He had a longing to let it take him whither it would. If only he could find an influence to which he could give himself, an influence whose strength upon him would be tremendous, an influence which would sweep him away!

If only he could get rid of his long fidelity!

When he climbed dripping, and with his hair plastered down on his forehead, into the boat, the Albanian stared at him as if in surprise.

"What's the matter?" said Dion in French, when he was dry and getting into his clothes.

But the man only replied:

"Monsieur très fort molto forte, moi aussi très fort. Monsieur venez sempre con moi!"

And he smiled with the evident intention of being agreeable to a valuable client. Dion did not badger him with any more questions. As the boat touched the quay he told the man to be ready to start for Therapia that day at any time after three o'clock.

When he reached the summer villa of the Ambassador he was informed by a tall English footman that Lady Ingleton was at home. She received Dion in the midst of the little dogs, but after he had been with her for a very few minutes she rang for a servant and banished them. Secretly she was deeply interested in this man who had killed his son, but she gave Dion no reason to suppose that she was concentrating on him. Her lazy, indifferent manner was perfectly natural, but perhaps now and then she was more definitely kind than usual; and she managed somehow to show Dion that she was ready to be his friend.

"If you stay long we must take you over one day on the yacht to Brûsa," she said presently. "Cynthia loves Brûsa, and so does my husband. We went there once with Pierre Loti. Cynthia and poor Beadon Clarke were of the party, I remember. We had a delightful time."

"Why do you say poor Beadon Clarke?" asked Dion abruptly.

That day he was at a great parting of the ways. He was concentrated upon himself and his own decision, so concentrated that the conventions meant little to him. He was totally unaware of the brusqueness of such a question asked of a woman whom he had never seen before.

"One pities a thoroughly good fellow who does a thoroughly foolish thing. It was a very, very foolish thing to do to attack Cynthia."

"I was in court during part of the trial."

"Well, then, you know how foolish it was. Some people can't be attacked with impunity."

The inflexion of Lady Ingleton's voice at that moment made Dion think of Mrs. Chetwinde. Once or twice Mrs. Chetwinde's voice had sounded almost exactly like that when she had spoken of Mrs. Clarke.

"Especially people who are innocent," he said.

"Naturally, as Cynthia was. Beadon Clarke made a terrible mistake, poor fellow."

When Dion got up to go she again alluded to his staying on at Buyukdereh, with an " if " attached to the allusion, and her dark eyes, which looked like an Italian's, rested upon him with a soft, but very intelligent, scrutiny. He had an odd feeling that she had taken a liking to him, and yet that she did not wish him to stay on in Buyukdereh.

" I don't quite know what I am going to do," he said.

As he spoke the hideous freedom of his empty life seemed to gather itself together, and to flow stealthily upon him like a filthy wave bearing refuse upon its surface.

" I'm a free agent," he added, looking hard at Lady Ingleton. " I have no ties."

He shook her hand and went away.

That evening she said to her husband :

" I have felt sorry for myself occasionally, and for other people in my Christian moments, but I have never in the past felt so sorry for anyone as I feel now for Mr. Leith."

" Because of the tragedy which has marred his life ? "

" It isn't only that. He's on the edge of so much."

" You don't mean——? "

Sir Carey paused.

" No, no," Lady Ingleton said, almost impatiently. " Life hasn't done with that man yet. I could almost find it in my heart to wish it had. Shall we take him to Brûsa on the yacht ? That would advertise our acquaintance with him to all the gossips on the Bosporus. I promised Cynthia I would throw my mantle over him."

" I'm always ready for a visit to your only rival," said Sir Carey.

" La Mosquée Verte ! I'll think about it. We might go for three or four days."

Her warm voice sounded rather reluctant ; yet her husband knew that she wished to go.

" It would be an excellent way of showing your mantle to the gossips," he remarked. " But you always think of excellent ways."

Two days later the Embassy yacht, the " Leyla," having on board Sir Carey and Lady Ingleton, Mrs. Clarke, Cyril Vane, Dion, and Turkish Jane, the doyenne of the Pekinese, sailed for Mudania on the sea of Marmora, which is the Port of Brûsa.

## CHAPTER V

ON the day after the return of the "Leyla" from Mudania, Mrs. Clarke asked Dion if he would dine with her at the Villa Hafiz. She asked him by word of mouth. They had met on the quay. It was morning, and Dion was about to embark in the Albanian's boat for a row on the Bosporus when he saw Mrs. Clarke's thin figure approaching him under a white umbrella lined with delicate green. She was wearing smoked spectacles, which made her white face look strange and almost forbidding in the strong sunlight.

"I can't come," he said.

And there was a sound almost of desperation in his voice.

"I can't."

She said nothing, but she stood there beside him looking very inflexible. Apparently she was waiting for an explanation of his refusal, though she did not ask for it.

"I can't be with people. It's no use. I've tried it. You didn't know——"

"Yes, I did," she interrupted him.

"You did know?"

He stood staring blankly at her.

"Surely I—I tried my best. I did my utmost to hide it."

"You couldn't hide it from me."

"I must go away," he said.

"Come to-night. Nobody will be there."

"It isn't a party?"

"We shall be alone."

"You meant to ask people?"

"I won't. I'll ask nobody. Half-past eight?"

"I'll come," he said.

She turned away without another word.

Just after half-past eight he rang at the door of the villa. As he went into the hall and smelt the strong perfume of flowers he wondered that he had dared to come. But he had been with Mrs. Clarke when she was in horrible circumstances; he had sat and watched her when she was under the knife; he had helped her to pass through a crowd of people fighting to stare at her and making hideous comments upon her. Then why, even to-night, should he dread her eyes? His remembrance of her tragedy made him feel that

hers was the one house into which he could enter that night.

As he walked into the drawing-room he recollected walking into Mrs. Chetwinde's drawing-room, full of interest in the woman who was in sanctuary, but who was soon to be delivered up, stripped by a man of the law's horrible allegations, to the gaping crowd. Now she was living peacefully among her friends, the custodian of her boy, a woman who had won through; and he was a wanderer, a childless father, the slayer of his son.

Mrs. Clarke kept him waiting for a few minutes. He stood at the French window and listened to the fountain. In the fall of the water there was surely an undertune. He seemed to know that it was there and yet he could not hear it; and he felt baffled as if by a thin mystery.

Then Mrs. Clarke came in and they went at once to dinner.

During dinner they talked very little. She spoke when the Greek butler was in the room, and Dion did his best in reply; nevertheless the conversation languished. Although Dion had so few words to give to his hostess he felt abnormally alive. The whole of him was like a quivering nerve.

When dinner was over Mrs. Clarke said to the butler:

"Osman will make the coffee for us. He knows about it. We shall have it in the pavilion."

The butler, who, although a Greek, looked at that moment almost incredibly stolid, moved his rather pouting lips, no doubt in assent, and was gone. They saw him no more that night.

They walked slowly from terrace to terrace of the climbing garden till they came to the height on which the pavilion stood guarded by the two mighty cypresses. There was no moon, and the night was a very dark purple night, with stars that looked dim and remote, like lost stars in the wilderness of infinity. From the terraces came the scent of flowers. In the pavilion one hanging lamp gave a faint light which emphasized the obscurity. It shone through coloured panes and drew thick shadows on the floor and on sections of the divans. The heaps of cushions were colourless, and had a strange look of unyielding massiveness, as if they were blocks of some hard material. Osman stood beside one of the coffee-tables.

As soon as his mistress appeared he began to make the coffee. Dion stayed upon the terrace, and Mrs. Clarke went into the pavilion and sat down.

The cypresses were like dark towers in the night. Dion looked up at them. Their summits were lost in the brooding purple darkness. Cypresses! Why had he thought of cypresses in England in connexion with Mrs. Clarke? Why had he seen her standing among cypresses, seen himself coming to her and with her in the midst of the immense shadows they cast? No doubt simply because he knew she lived much in Turkey, the land of the cypress. That must have been the reason. Nevertheless now he was oppressed by a weight of mystery somehow connected with those dark and gigantic trees; and he remembered the theory that the past, the present and the future are simultaneously in being, and that those who are said to read the future in reality possess only the power of seeing what already is on another plane. Had he in England, however vaguely, however dimly, seen as through a crack some blurred vision of what was already in existence? He felt almost afraid of the cypresses. Nevertheless, as he stood looking up at them, his sense almost of fear tempted him to make an experiment. He remained absolutely still, and strove to concentrate all his faculties. After a long pause he shut his eyes.

"If the far future is even now in being," he said mentally, "let me look upon it now."

He saw nothing; but immediately he heard the sound of wind among pine trees, as he had heard it with Rosamund in the green valley of Elis. It rose in the silent night, that long murmur of eternity, and presently faded away.

He shuddered and turned sharply towards the pavilion. Osman had gone, and Mrs. Clarke was pouring the coffee into the tiny cups.

"There's no wind, is there—is there?" he asked her.

She looked up at him.

"But not a breath!" she said.

After a pause she added:

"Why do you ask such a thing?"

"I heard wind in—in the tops of trees," he almost stammered.

"That's impossible."

"But I say I did!" he exclaimed, with violence. "In pine trees."

"There are no pine trees here," she said, in her husky voice. "Sit down and have your coffee."

He obeyed her and sat down quickly, and quickly he took the coffee-cup from her.

"Have a little *mastika* with it," she said.

And she pushed a tall liqueur-glass full of the colourless liquid towards him.

"Yes," he said.

As he drank he looked out sideways through the wide opening in the pavilion. There was not a breath of wind.

"I can't understand why I heard the noise of wind in pine trees," he forced himself to say.

"Seemed to hear it," she corrected him. "Perhaps you were thinking of it."

"But I wasn't!"

A jewelled gleam from the lamp fell upon one side of her face. She moved, and the light dropped away from her.

"What were you thinking of?" she asked.

"Of the future."

"Ah!"

"That's why it is inexplicable."

"I don't understand."

"Don't let us talk about it any more," he said, in an almost terrible voice. "I must have had an hallucination."

"Have you ever before thought you were the victim of an hallucination?" she asked.

"Yes. Several times I have seen the eyes of my little boy. I saw them a few nights ago in the stream that flows through the Valley of Roses, just after Sir Carey had left me."

"Don't look into water again except in daylight. It is the night that brings fancies with it. If you gaze very long at anything in a dim light you are sure to see something strange or horrible."

"But an hallucination of sound! I must go away from here! Perhaps in some other place——"

But she interrupted him inflexibly.

"Going away would be absolutely useless. A man can't travel away from himself."

"But I can't lead a normal life. It's impossible. Those horrible nights on the 'Leyla'——"

He stopped. The effort he had made during the trip to Brûsa seemed to have exhausted the last remnants of any moral force he had still possessed when he started on that journey.

"I had made up my mind to begin again, to lay hold on some sort of real life," he continued, after a pause. "I was determined to face things. I called at Therapia. I accepted Lady Ingleton's invitation. I've done all I can to make a

new start. But it's no use. I can't keep it up. I haven't the force for it. It was hell—being with happy people."

"You mean the Ingletons. Yes, they are very happy."

"And Vane, who's just engaged to be married. I saw her photograph in his cabin. They were all—all very kind. Lady Ingleton did everything to make me feel at ease. He's a delightful fellow—the Ambassador, I mean. But I simply can't stand mingling my life with lives that are happy. So I had better go away and be alone again."

"And lives that are unhappy?"

'What do you mean?"

"Can't you mingle your life with them, or with one of them?"

He was silent, looking towards her. She was wearing a very dark blue tea-gown of some thin material in which her thin body seemed lost. He saw the dark folds of it flowing over the divan on which she was leaning, and trailing to the rug at her feet. Her face was a faint whiteness under her colourless hair. Her eyes were two darknesses in it. He could not see them distinctly, but he knew they were looking intent and distressed.

"Haven't you told me I look punished?" said the husky voice.

"Are you unhappy?" he asked.

"Do you think I have much reason to be happy?"

"You have your boy."

"For a few weeks in the year. I have lost my husband in a horrible way, worse than if he had died. I live entirely alone. I can't marry again. And yet I'm not at all old, and not at all finished. But perhaps you have never really thought about my situation seriously. After all, why should you? Why should anyone? I won my case, and so of course it's all right."

"Are *you* unhappy, then?"

"What do you suppose about me?"

"I know you've gone through a great deal. But you have your boy."

There was a sound almost of dull obstinacy in his voice.

"Some women are not merely mothers, or potential mothers!" said an almost fierce voice. "Some women are just women first and mothers second. There are women who love men for themselves, not merely because men are possible child-bringers. To a real and complete woman no child can ever be the perfect substitute for a husband or a lover. Even

nature has put the lover first and the child second. I forbid you to say that I have my boy, as if that settled the question of my happiness. I forbid you."

He heard her breathing quickly. Then she added :

" But how could you be expected to understand women like me ? "

The intensity of her sudden outburst startled him as the strength of the current in the Bosporus had startled him when he plunged into the sea from the Albanian's boat.

" You have been brought up in another school," she continued slowly, and with a sort of icy bitterness. " I forgive you."

She got up from the divan and went out upon the terrace, leaving him alone in the pavilion, which seemed suddenly colder when she had left it.

He did not follow her. A breath from a human furnace had scorched him—had scorched the nerve, and the nerve quivered.

" You have been brought up in a different school." Welsley and Stamboul—Rosamund and Mrs. Clarke. Once, somewhere, he had made that comparison. As he sat in the pavilion it seemed to him that for a moment he heard the cool chiming of bells in a grey cathedral tower, the faint sound of the Dresden Amen. But he looked out through the opening in the pavilion, and far down below he saw lights on the Bay of Buyukdereh, the vague outlines of hills; and the perfume that came to him out of the night was not the damp smell of an English garden.

An English garden ! In the darkness of a November night he stood within the walls of an English garden ; he heard a cry, saw the movement of a woman's body, and knew that his life was in ruins. The woman fled, but he followed her blindly; he sought for her in the dark. He wanted to tell her that he had been but the instrument of Fate, that he was not to blame, that he needed compassion more than any other man living. But she eluded him in the darkness, and presently he heard a key grind in a lock. A friend had locked the door of his home against him in order that his wife might have time to escape from him.

Then he heard a husky voice say, " My friend, it will have to come." And, suddenly, it came.

He broke down absolutely, threw himself on his face on the divan with his arms stretched out beyond his head, grasped the cushions and sobbed. His body shook and

twitched; his face was contorted; his soul writhed. A storm that came from within him broke upon him. He crashed into the abyss. Down, down he went, till the last faint ray from above was utterly blotted out. She whom he had loved so much sent him down, she who far away had given herself to God. He felt her ruthless hands—the hands of a good woman, the hands of a loving mother—pressing him down. Let her have her will. He would go into the last darkness. Then, perhaps, she would be more at ease; then, perhaps, she would know the true peace of God. He would pay to the uttermost farthing both for himself and for her.

Outside, just hidden from him by the pavilion wall, Mrs. Clarke stood in the shadow of one of the cypresses, and listened. The trip on the "Leyla" had served two purposes. It was better so. When a thing must be, the sooner it is over the better. And she had waited for a very long time. She drew her brows together as she thought of the long time she had waited. Then she moved and walked away down the terrace. She had heard enough.

She went to the far end of the terrace. A wooden seat was placed there in the shadow of a plane tree. She sat down on it, rested her pointed chin in the palm of her right hand, with her elbow on her knee, and remained motionless. She was giving him time; time to weep away the past and the good woman who had ruined his life. Even now she knew how to be patient. In a way she pitied him. If she had not had to be patient for such a long time she would have pitied him much more. But he had often hurt her; and, as Lady Ingleton had said, she was by nature a cruel woman. Nevertheless she pitied him for being, or for having been, so exclusive in love. And she wondered at him not a little.

Lit-up caïques glided out on the bay far beneath her. A band was playing on the quay. She wished it would stop, and she glanced at a little watch which Aristide Dumeny had given her, and which was pinned among the dark blue folds of her gown. But she could not see its face clearly, and she lit a match. A quarter-past ten. The band played till eleven. She lit a cigarette and stared down the hill at the moving lights in the bay.

She had made many water excursions at night. Some of them—two or three at least—had been mentioned in the Divorce Court. She had had a narrow escape that summer in London. It had given her a lesson; but she still had much to learn before she could be considered a past mistress

in the school of discretion. Almost ever since she could remember she had been driven by the reckless spirit within her. But she had been given a compensation for that in the force of her will. That force had done wonders for her all through her life. It had even captured and retained for her many women friends. Driven she had been, and no doubt would always be, but she believed that she would always skirt the precipices of life, and would never fall into the abysses.

The timorous and overscrupulous women were the women who missed their footing, because, when they made a false step, they made it in fear and trembling, with the shadow of regret always dogging their heels. And yet, now Jimmy was getting a big boy, even she knew moments of fear.

She moved restlessly. The torch was luring her on, and yet now, for an instant, she was conscious of holding back. August was not far off; Jimmy was coming out to her for his holidays. Suppose, after all, she gave it up? A word from her—or merely a silence—and that man in the pavilion close by would go away from Buyukdereh and would probably never come back. If, for once in her life, she played for safety?

The sound of the band on the quay—there had been a short interval of silence—came up to her again. Forty minutes more! She would give that man in the pavilion and herself forty minutes. She could see the lights which outlined the kiosk, When they went out she would come to a decision. Till then, sitting alone, she could indulge in a mental debate. The mere fact that, at this point, she debated the question which filled her mind proved Jimmy's power over her. As she thought that she began to resent her boy's power. And it would grow; inevitably it would grow. She moved her thin shoulders. Then she sat very still.

If only she didn't love Jimmy so much! Suppose she had lost her case in the Divorce Court and Jimmy had been taken away from her? Even now she shuddered when she thought of the risk she had run. She remembered again the period of waiting when the jury could not come to an agreement. What torture she had endured, though no one knew it, or, perhaps, ever would know it! Had not that torture been a tremendous warning to her against the unwise life? Why go into danger again? But perhaps there was no danger any more. A man who has tried to divorce his wife once,

and has failed, is scarcely likely to try again. Nevertheless she was full of hesitation to-night.

This fact puzzled and almost alarmed her, for she was not given to hesitation. She was a woman who thought clearly, who knew what she wanted and what she did not want, and who acted promptly and decisively. Perhaps she hesitated now because she had been forced to remain inactive in this particular case for such a long time ; or perhaps she had received an obscure warning from something within her which knew what she—the whole of her that was Cynthia Clarke—did not consciously know.

The leaves of the plane tree rustled above her head, and she sighed. As she sat there in the purple darkness she looked like a victim ; and for a moment she thought of herself as a victim.

Even that man in the pavilion who was agonizing had said to her that she looked "punished." She had been surprised, almost startled, by his flash of discernment. But she was sure he thought that matter only a question of colouring, of emaciation, of the shapes of features, and of the way eyes were set in the head.

When would the lights far below go out ? She hated her indecision. It was new to her, and she felt it to be a weakness. Whatever she had been till now, she had certainly never been a weak woman, except perhaps from the absurd point of view of the Exeter Hall moralist. Scruples had been strangers to her, a baggage she had not burdened herself with on her journey.

Jimmy ! That night Dion Leith had told her that he had seen the eyes of his boy in the stream that flowed through the Kesstâne Dereh. She looked out into the purple night, and somewhere in the dim vastness full of mysteries and of half revelations she saw the frank and merciless eyes of a young Eton boy.

Should she be governed by them ? Could she submit to the ignorant domination of a child who knew nothing of the complications of human life, nothing of the way in which human beings are driven by imperious desires, or needs, which have perhaps been sown in ground of flesh and blood by dead parents, or by ancestors laid even with the dust ? Could she immolate herself before the altar of the curious love which grew within her as Jimmy grew ?

She was by nature perverse, and it was partly her love for Jimmy which pushed her towards the man who had killed

his son. But she had not told that even to herself. And she never told her secrets to other people, not even when they were women friends !

The lights in the kiosk on the quay went out. Mrs. Clarke was startled by the leaping up of the darkness which seemed to come from the sea. For her ears had been closed against the band, and she had forgotten the limit she had mentally put to her indecision. Eleven o'clock already ! She got up from her seat. But still she hesitated. She did not know what she was going to do. She stood for a moment. Then she walked softly towards the pavilion. When she was near to it she stopped and listened. She did not hear any sound from within. There was nothing to prevent her from descending to the villa, from writing a note to Dion Leith asking him to leave Buyukdereh on the morrow, and from going up to her bedroom. He would find the note in the hall when he came down ; he would go away ; she need never see him again. If she did that it would mean a new life for her, free from complications, a life dedicated to Jimmy, a life deliberately controlled.

It would mean, too, the futile close of a long pursuit ; the crushing of an old and hitherto frustrated desire ; the return, when Jimmy went back to England after the holidays, to an empty life which she hated, more than hated, a life of horrible restlessness, a life in which the imagination preyed, like a vulture, upon the body. It would mean the wise, instead of the unwise, life.

She stood there. With one hand she felt the little watch which Dumeny had given her. It was cold to the touch of her dry, hot hand. She felt the rough emerald set in the back of it. She and Dumeny had found that in the bazaars together, in those bazaars which Dumeny changed from Eastern shops into the Arabian Nights. Dion Leith could never do such a thing as that for her. But perhaps she could do it for him. The thought of that lured her. She stood at the street corner ; it was very dark and still ; she knew that the strange ways radiated from the place where she stood, but there was no one to go with her down them. She waited —waited. And then she saw far off the gleam of the torch from which spring coloured fires. It flitted through the darkness ; it hovered. The gleam of it lit up, like a goblin light, the beginnings of the strange ways. She saw shadowy forms slipping away stealthily into their narrow and winding distances ; she saw obscure stairways, leaning balconies full

of soft blackness. She divined the rooms beyond. And whispering voices came to her ears.

All the time she was feeling the watch with its rough uncut emerald.

Government came upon her. She felt, as often before, a great hand catch her in a grip of iron. She ceased to resist.

Still holding the watch, she went to the opening in the pavilion.

The hanging lamp had gone out. For a moment she could only see darkness in the interior. It looked empty. There was no sound within. Could the man she had been thinking about, debating about, have slipped away while she was sitting under the plane tree? She had been thinking so deeply that she had not heard the noise of the band on the quay; she might not have heard his footsteps. While she had been considering whether she should leave him perhaps he had fled from her.

This flashing thought brought her back at once to her true and irrevocable self, and she was filled instantly with fierce determination and a cold, intense anger. Jimmy was forgotten. He was dead to her at that moment. She leaned forward, peering into the darkness.

"Dion!" she said. "Dion!"

There was no answer, but she saw something stir within, something low down. He was there—or something was there, something alive. She went into the pavilion, and knelt down by it.

"Dion!" she said.

He raised himself on the divan, and turned on his side.

"Why are you kneeling down?" he said. "Don't kneel. I hate to see a woman kneeling, and I know *you* never pray. Get up."

He spoke in a voice that was new to her. It seemed to her hot and hard. She obeyed him at once and got up from her knees.

"What did you mean just now when you asked me whether I couldn't mingle my life with an unhappy life? Sit here beside me."

She sat down on the edge of the divan very near to him.

"What do you suppose I meant?"

"Do you mean to say you like me in that way?"

"Yes."

"That you care about me?"

"Yes."

"You said you willed me to come out to Constantinople. Was it for that reason?"

She hesitated. She had an instinctive understanding of men, but she knew that, in one way, Dion was not an ordinary man; and even if he had been, the catastrophe in his life might well have put him for the time beyond the limits of her experience, wide though they were.

"No," she said, at last. "I didn't like you in that way till I met you in the street, and saw what she had done to you."

"Then it was only pity?"

"Was it? I knew your value in England."

She paused, then added, in an almost light and much more impersonal voice:

"I think I may say that I'm a connoisseur of values. And I hate to see a good thing flung away."

"I'm not a good thing. Perhaps I might have become one. I believe I was on the way to becoming worth something. But now I'm nothing, and I wish to be nothing."

"I don't wish you to be anything but what you are."

"Once you telegraphed to me—'May Allah have you in His hand.'"

"I remember."

"It's turned out differently," he said, almost with brutality.

"We don't know that. You came back."

"Yes. I was kept safe for a very good reason. I had to kill my child. I've accomplished that mission, and now, perhaps, Allah will let me alone."

She could not see his face or the expression in his eyes clearly, but now she saw his body move sharply. It twisted to the right and back again. She put out her hand and took his listlessly, almost as she had taken it in Mrs. Chetwinde's drawing-room when she had met him for the first time.

"Your hand is like fire," he whispered.

"Do you think I am ice?" she whispered back, huskily.

"Once I tried to take my hand away from yours."

"Try to take it away now, if you wish to."

As she spoke she closed her hand tenaciously upon his. Her little fingers felt almost like steel on his hand, and he thought of the current of the Bosphorus which had pulled at his swimming body.

To be taken and swept away! That at least would be better than drifting, better than death in the form of life,

better than slinking in loneliness to watch the doings of others.

"I don't wish to take it away," he said.

And with the words mentally he bade an eternal farewell to Rosamund and to all the aspirations of his youth. From her and from them he turned away to follow the gleam of the torch. It flickered through the darkness; it wavered; it waited—for him. He had tried the life of wisdom, and it had cast him out; perhaps there was a place for him in the unwise life. He felt spiritually exhausted; but there was within him a physical fever which answered to the fever in the hand which had closed on his.

"Let the spirit die," he thought, "that the body may live!"

He put one arm round his companion.

"If you want me——" he whispered, on a deep breath.

His voice died away in the darkness between the giant cypresses, those trees which watch over the dead in the land of the Turk.

*She* had said once that the human being can hurt God.

Obscurely he wished to do that.

## CHAPTER VI

MRS. CLARKE looked up from a letter written in a large boyish hand which had just been brought out on to the terrace of the fountain by the butler.

"Jimmy will be here on Thursday—that is, in Constantinople. The train ought to be in early in the morning."

Her eyes rested on Dion for a moment; then she looked down again at the letter from Eton.

"He's in a high state of spirits at the prospect of the journey. But perhaps I oughtn't to have had him out; perhaps I ought to have gone to England for his holidays."

"Do you mean because of me?" said Dion.

"I was thinking of cricket," she replied impassively.

He was silent. After a moment she continued:

"There are no suitable companions for him out here. I wish the Ingletons had a son. Of course there is riding, swimming, boating, and we can make excursions. You'll be good to him, won't you?"

She folded the letter up and put it into the envelope.

"I always keep all Jimmy's letters," she said.

"Look here!" Dion said, in a hard voice. "I think I'd better go."

"Why?"

"You know why."

"Have I asked you to go?"

"No, but I think I shall clear out. I don't feel like acting a part to a boy. I've never done such a thing, and it isn't at all the sort of thing I could do well."

"There will be no need to act a part. Be with Jimmy as you were in London."

"Look at me!" he exclaimed, with intense bitterness. "Am I the man I was in London?"

"If you are careful and reasonable, Jimmy won't notice any difference. Hero worship doesn't look at things through a microscope. Jimmy's got his idea of you. It will be your fault if he changes it."

"Did you tell him I should be here during the holidays?"

"Yes."

"I can't help that," he said, almost brutally.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that you answered for me before you knew where I should be."

He got up from the straw chair on which he was sitting, almost as if he meant to go away from her and from Buyukdereh at once.

"Dion, you mustn't go," she said inflexibly. "I can't let you. For if you go, you will never come back."

"How do you know that?"

"I do know it."

They looked at each other across the fountain; his eyes fell at last almost guiltily before her steady glance.

"And you know it too," she said.

"I may go, nevertheless. Who is to prevent me?"

She got up, went to the other side of the fountain, and put her hand behind his arm, after a quick glance round to make sure that no eyes were watching her. She pushed her hand down gently and held his wrist.

"Do you realize how badly you sometimes treat me?" she said.

"Yes."

She pulled his soft cuff with her little fingers.

"I do realize it, but I can't help it. I have to do it."

"If I didn't know that I should mind it much more," she said.

"I never thought I had it in me to treat a woman as I sometimes treat you. I used—to be so different."

"You were too much the other way. But yours is a nature of extremes. That's partly why I——"

She did not finish the sentence.

"Then you don't resent my beastliness to you?" he asked.

"Not permanently. Sometimes you are nice to me. But if you were ever to treat me badly when Jimmy was with me, I don't think I could ever forgive you."

"I dread his coming," said Dion. "I had much better go. If you don't let me go, you may regret it."

In saying that he acknowledged the power she had already obtained over him, a power from which he did not feel sure that he could break away, although he was acutely aware of it and sometimes almost bitterly resented it. Mrs. Clarke knew very well that most men can only be held when they do not know that they are held, but Dion, in his present condition, was not like any other man she had known. More than once in the earliest stages of their intimacy she had had really to fight to keep him near her, and so he knew how arbitrary she could be when her nature was roused.

Sometimes he hated her with intensity, for she had set herself to destroy the fabric of his spirit, which not even Rosamund had been able entirely to destroy by her desertion of him. Sometimes he felt a sort of ugly love of her, because she was the agent through whom he was learning to get rid of all that Rosamund had most prized in him. It was as if he called out to her, "Help me to pull down, to tear down, all that I built up in the long years till not one stone is left upon another. What I built up was despised and rejected. I won't look upon it any more. I'll raze it to the ground. But I can't do that alone. Come, you, and help me." And she came and she helped in the work of destruction, and in an ugly, horrible way he loved her for it sometimes, as a criminal might love an assistant in his crime.

But from such a type of love there are terrible reactions. During those reactions Dion had treated Cynthia Clarke abominably sometimes, showing the hatred which alternated with his ugly love, if love it could properly be called. He hated her in such moments for the fierce lure she had for the senses, a lure which he felt more and more strongly as he left farther behind him the old life of sane enjoyments and

of the wisdom which walks with restraint ; he hated her for the perversity which he was increasingly conscious of as he came to know her more intimately ; he hated her because he had so much loved the woman who would not make a friend of her ; he hated her because he knew that she was drawing him into a path which led into the centre of a maze, the maze of hypocrisy.

Hitherto Dion had been essentially honest and truthful, what men call "open and above-board." He had walked clear-eyed in the light ; he had had nothing dirty to hide ; what his relations with others had seemed to be that they had actually been. But since that first night in the pavilion Cynthia Clarke had taught him very thoroughly the hypocrisy a man owes to the woman with whom he has a secret liaison.

He still believed that till that night she had been what the world calls "a straight woman." She did not ape a rigid morality for once betrayed by passion, or pretend to any religious scruples, or show any fears of an eventual punishment held in reserve for all sinners by an implacable Power ; she did not, when Dion was brutal to her, ever reproach him with having made of her a wicked or even a light woman. But she made him feel by innumerable hints and subtleties that for him she had exchanged a safe life for a life that was beset with danger, the smiled-on life of a not too conventional virtue for something very different. She seemed sometimes uneasy in her love, as if such a love were an error new to her experience.

Jimmy was her chief weapon against Dion's natural sincerity. Dion realized that she was passionately attached to her boy, and that she would make almost any sacrifice rather than lose his respect and affection. Nevertheless, she was ready to take great risks. The risks she was not prepared to take were the smaller risks. And in connexion with them her call for hypocrisy was incessant. If Dion ever tried to resist her demands for small lies and petty deceptions, she would look at him, and say huskily :

"I have to do these things now because of Jimmy. No one must ever have the least suspicion of what we are to each other, or some day Jimmy might get to know of it. It isn't my husband I'm afraid of, it's Jimmy."

If Dion had been by nature a suspicious man, or if he had had a wider experience of women, Mrs. Clarke's remarkable ingenuity in hypocrisy would almost certainly have suggested to him that she was no novice in the life of deception. Her

appearance of frankness, even of bluntness, was admirable. To every one she presented herself as a woman of strong will and unconventional temperament who took her own way openly, having nothing to conceal, and therefore nothing to fear. She made a feature of her friendship with the tragic Englishman; she even dwelt upon it and paraded it for the benefit of the gossiping world on the Bosporus; but that pretence of blunt and Platonic friendship was the cloud with which she concealed the fire of their illicit relation. The trip on the "Leyla" to Brûsa had tortured Dion. Since the episode in the pavilion a more refined torment had been his. Mrs. Clarke had not allowed him to escape from the social ties which were so hateful to him. She had made him understand that he must go among her acquaintances now and then, that he must take a certain part in the summer life of Therapia and Buyukdereh, that the trip to Brûsa had been only a beginning. More than once he had tried to break away, but he had not succeeded in his effort. Her will had been too strong for his, not merely because she did not fear at moments to be fierce and determined, but because behind her fierceness and determination was an unuttered plea which his not dead chivalry heard: "For you I have become what I was falsely accused of being in London." He remembered the wonderful fight she had made then; often her look and manner, when they were alone together, implied, "I couldn't make such a fight now." She never said that, but she made him float in an atmosphere of that suggestion.

He believed that she loved him. Sometimes he compared her love with the affection which Rosamund had given him, and then it seemed to his not very experienced heart that perhaps intense love can only show itself by something akin to degradation, by enticements which a genuinely pure nature could never descend to, by perversities which the grand simplicity and wholesomeness of goodness would certainly abhor. Then a distortion of love presented itself to his tragic investigation as the only love that was real, and good and evil lost for him their true significance. He had said to himself, "Let the spirit die that the body may live." He had wished, he still wished, to pull down. He had a sort of demented desire for ruins and dust. But he longed for action on the grand scale. Small secrecies, trickeries, tiptoeing through the maze—all these things revolted that part of his nature which was, perhaps, unchangeable. They seemed to him unmanly. In his present condition he could

quite easily have lain down in the sink of Pera's iniquity, careless whether anyone knew; but it was horribly difficult to him to dine with the Ingletons and Vane at the Villa Hafiz, to say "Good night" to Mrs. Clarke before them, to go away, leaving them in the villa, and then, very late, to sneak back, with a key, to the garden gate, when all the servants were in bed, and to creep up, like a thief, to the pavilion. Some men would have enjoyed all the small deceptions, would have thought them good fun, would have found that they added a sharp zest to the pursuit of a woman. Dion loathed them.

And now he was confronted with something he was going to loathe far more, something which would call for more sustained and elaborate deception than any he had practised yet. He feared the eyes of an English boy more than he feared the eyes of the diplomats and the cosmopolitans of varying types who were gathered on the Bosphorus during the months of heat. He detested the idea of playing a part to a boy. How could a mother lay plots to deceive her son? And yet Mrs. Clarke adored Jimmy.

Rosamund with Robin started up in his mind. He saw them before him as he had seen them one night in Westminster when Rosamund had been singing to Robin. Ah, she had been a cruel, a terribly cruel, wife, but she had been an ideal mother! He saw her head bent over her child, the curve of her arm round his little body. A sensation of sickness came upon him, of soul-nausea; and again he thought, "I must get away."

The night before the day on which Jimmy was due to arrive, Mrs. Clarke was in Constantinople. She had gone there to meet Jimmy, and had started early in the morning, leaving Dion at Buyukdereh. When she was gone he took the Albanian's boat and went out on the Bosporus for a row. The man and he were both at the oars, and pulled out from the bay. When they had gone some distance—they had been rowing for perhaps ten minutes—the man asked:

"Où allons-nous, Signore?"

"Vers Constantinople," replied Dion.

"Bene!" replied the man.

That night Mrs. Clarke had just finished dinner when a waiter tapped at her sitting-room door.

"What is it?" she said.

"A gentleman asks if he can see you, Madame."

"A gentleman? Have you got his card?"

"No, Madame; he gave no card."

"What is he like?"

"He is English, I think, very thin and very brown. He looks very strong."

The waiter paused, then added:

"He has a hungry look."

Mrs. Clarke stared at the man with her very wide-open eyes.

"Go down and ask him to wait."

"Yes, Madame."

The man went out. When he had shut the door Mrs. Clarke called:

"Sonia!"

Her raised voice was rather harsh.

The bedroom door was opened, and the Russian maid looked into the sitting-room.

"Sonia," said Mrs. Clarke rapidly in French, "some one—a man—has called and asked for me. He's waiting in the hall. Go down and see who it is. If it's Mr. Leith you can bring him up."

"And if it is not Monsieur Leith?"

"Come back and tell me who it is."

The maid came out of the bedroom, shut the door, crossed the sitting-room rather heavily on flat feet, and went out on to the landing.

"Shut the door!" Mrs. Clarke called after her.

When the sitting-room door was shut she sat waiting with her forehead drawn to a frown. She did not move till the sitting-room door was opened by the maid and a man walked in.

"Monsieur Leith," said the maid.

And she disappeared.

"Come and sit down," said Mrs. Clarke. "Why have you come to Pera?"

"I wanted to speak to you."

"How tired you look! Have you had dinner?"

"No, I don't want it."

"Did you come by steamer?"

"No, I rowed down."

"All the way?"

He nodded.

"Where are you staying?"

"I haven't decided yet where I shall stay. Not here, of course."

"Of course not. Dion, sit down."

He sat down heavily.

"If you haven't decided about an hotel, where is your luggage?"

"I haven't brought any."

She said nothing, but her distressed eyes questioned him.

"I started out for a row. The current set towards Constantinople, so I came here."

"I'm glad," she said.

But she did not look glad.

"We can spend a quiet evening together," she added nonchalantly.

"I didn't come for that," he said.

He began to get up, but she put one hand on him.

"Do sit still. What is it, then? Whatever it is, tell me quietly."

He yielded to her soft but very imperative touch, and sat back in his chair.

"Now, what is it?"

"I'm sure you know. It's Jimmy."

She lowered her eyelids, and her pale forehead puckered.

"Jimmy! What about Jimmy?"

"I don't want to be at Buyukdereh while he's with you."

"And you have rowed down all the way from Buyukdereh to Constantinople, without even a brush and comb, to tell me that!"

"I told you at Buyukdereh."

"And we decided that it would be much jollier for Jimmy to have you there for his holidays. I depend upon you to make things tolerable for Jimmy. You know how few people there are near us who would trouble themselves about a boy. You will be my stand-by with Jimmy all through his holidays."

She spoke serenely, even cheerfully, but there was a decisive sound in her voice, and the eyes fixed upon him were full of determination.

"I can't understand how you can be willing to act a lie to your own boy, especially when you care for him so much," said Dion, almost violently.

"I shall not act a lie."

"But you will."

"Sometimes you are horribly morbid," she said coldly.

"Morbid! Because I want to keep a young schoolboy out of——"

"Take care, Dion!" she interrupted harshly.

"If you—you don't really love Jimmy," he said.

"I forbid you to say that."

"I will say it. It's true."

And he repeated with a cruelly deliberate emphasis:

"You don't really love Jimmy."

Her white face was suddenly flooded with red, which even covered her forehead to the roots of her hair. She put up one hand with violence and tried to strike Dion on the mouth. He caught her wrist.

"Be quiet!" he said roughly.

Gripping her wrist with his hard, muscular brown fingers he repeated:

"You don't love Jimmy."

"Do you wish me to hate you?"

"I don't care. I don't care what happens to me."

She sat looking down. The red began to fade out of her face. Presently she curled her fingers inwards against his palm and smiled faintly.

"I am not going to quarrel with you," she said quietly.

He loosened his grip on her; but now she caught and held his hand.

"I do love Jimmy, and you know it when you aren't mad. But I care for you, too, and I am not going to lose you. If you went away while Jimmy was out here I should never see you again. You would disappear. Perhaps you would cross over to Asia."

Her great eyes were fixed steadily upon him.

"Ah, you have thought of that!" she said, almost in a whisper.

He was silent.

"Women would get hold of you. You would sink; you would be ruined, destroyed. I know!"

"If I were it wouldn't matter."

"To me it would. I can't risk it. I am not going to risk it."

Dion leaned forward. His brown face was twitching.

"Suppose you had to choose between Jimmy and me!"

He was thinking of Robin and Rosamund. A child had conquered him once. Now again a child—for Jimmy was no more than a child as yet, although he thought himself important and almost a young man—intruded into his life with a woman.

"I shall not have to choose. But I have told you that a child is not enough for the happiness of a woman like me.

You know what I am, and you must know I am speaking the truth."

"Did you love your husband?" he asked, staring into her eyes.

"Yes," she replied, without even a second of hesitation. "I did till he suspected me."

"And then——"

"Not after that," she said grimly.

"I wonder he let you do all you did."

"What do you mean?"

She let his hand go.

"I would never have let you go about with other men, however innocently. I thought about that at your trial."

"I should never let anyone interfere with my freedom of action. If a man loves me I expect him to trust me."

"You don't trust me."

"Sometimes you almost hate me. I know that."

"Sometimes I hate everybody, myself most of all. But I should miss you. You are the only woman in all the world who wants me now."

Suddenly a thought of his mother intruded into his mind, and he added:

"Wants me as a lover."

She got up quickly, almost impulsively, and went close to him.

"Yes, I want you, I want you as a lover, and I can't let you go. That is why I ask you, I beg you, to stay with me while Jimmy's here."

She leaned against him, and put her small hands on his shoulders.

"How can a child understand the needs of a woman like me and of a man like you? How can he look into our hearts or read the secrets of our natures—secrets which we can't help having? You hate what you call deceiving him. But he will never think about it. A boy of Jimmy's age never thinks about his mother in that way."

"I know. That's just it!"

"What do you mean?"

But he did not explain. Perhaps instinctively he felt that her natural subtlety could not be in accord with his natural sincerity, felt that in discussing certain subjects they talked in different languages. She put her arms round his neck.

"I need the two lives," she said, in a very low voice.

"I need Jimmy and I need you. Is it so very wonderful? Often when a woman who isn't old loses her husband and is left with her child people say, 'It's all right for her. She has got her child.' And so she's dismissed to her motherhood, as if that must be quite enough for her. Dion, Dion, the world doesn't know, or doesn't care, how women suffer. Women don't speak about such things. But I am telling you because I don't want to have secrets from you. I have suffered. Perhaps I have some pride in me. Anyhow, I don't care to go about complaining. You know that. You must have found that out in London. I keep my secrets, but not from you."

She put her white cheek against his brown one.

"It's only the two lives joined together that make life complete for a woman who is complete, who isn't lopsided, lacking in something essential, something that nature intends. I am a complete woman, and I'm not ashamed of it. Do you think I ought to be?"

She sighed against his cheek.

"You are a courageous woman," he said; "I do know that."

"Don't *you* test my courage. Perhaps I'm getting tired of being courageous."

She put her thin lips against his.

"It's acting—deception I hate," he murmured. "With a boy especially I like always to be quite open."

Again he thought of Robin and of his old ideal of a father's relation to his son; he thought of his preparation to be worthy of fatherhood, worthy to guide a boy's steps in the path towards a noble manhood. And a terrible sense of the irony of life almost overcame him. For a moment he seemed to catch a glimpse of the Creator laughing in darkness at the aspirations of men; for a moment he was beset by the awful conviction that the world is ruled by a malign Deity.

"All the time Jimmy is at Buyukdereh we'll just be friends," said the husky voice against his cheek.

The sophistry of her remark struck home to him, but he made no comment upon it.

"There are white deceptions," she continued, "and black deceptions, as there are white and black lies. Whom are we hurting, you and I?"

"Whom are we hurting?" he said, releasing himself from her.

And he thought of God in a different way—in Rosamund's way.

"Yes?"

He looked at her as if he were going to speak, but he said nothing. He felt that if he answered she would not understand, and her face made him doubtful. Which view of life was the right one, Rosamund's or Cynthia Clarke's? Rosamund had been pitiless to him and Cynthia Clarke was merciful. She put her arms round his neck when he was in misery; she wanted him despite the tragedy that was his perpetual companion. Perhaps her view of life was right. It was a good working view, anyhow, and was no doubt held by many people.

"We can base our lives on truth," she continued, as he said nothing. "On being true to ourselves. That is the great truth. But we can't always tell it to all the casual people about us, or even to those who are closely in our lives, as for instance Jimmy is in mine. They wouldn't understand. But some day Jimmy will be able to understand."

"Do you mean——"

"I mean just this: if Jimmy were twenty-one I would tell him everything."

He looked down into her eyes, which never fell before the eyes of another.

"I believe you would," he said.

She continued looking at him, as if tranquilly waiting for something.

"I'll—I'll go back to Buyukdereh," he said.

## CHAPTER VII

IN his contrition for the attack which he had made upon the honour of his wife at his mother's instigation, Beadon Clarke had given up all claims on his boy's time. Actually, though not legally, Mrs. Clarke had complete control over Jimmy. He spent all his holidays with her, and seldom saw his father, who was still attached to the British Embassy in Madrid. He had never been allowed to read any reports of the famous case which had been fought out between his parents, and was understood to think that his

father and mother had, for some mysterious reason, found it impossible to " hit it off together," and had therefore decided to live apart. He was now rather vaguely fond of his father, whom he considered to be " quite a good sort," but he was devoted to his mother. Mrs. Clarke's peculiar self-possession and remarkably strong will made a great impression on Jimmy. " It's jolly difficult to score my mater off, I can tell you," he occasionally remarked to his more intimate chums at school. He admired her appearance, her elegance, and the charm of her way of living, which he called " doing herself jolly well "; even her unsmiling face and characteristic lack of what is generally called vivacity won his approval. " My mater's above all that silly gushing and giggling so many women go in for, don't you know," was his verdict on Mrs. Clarke's usually serious demeanour. Into her gravity boyishly he read dignity of character, and in his estimation of her he set her very high. Although something of a pickle, and by nature rather reckless and inclined to be wild, he was swiftly obedient to his mother, partly perhaps because, understanding young males as well as she understood male beings of all ages, she very seldom drew the reins tight. He knew very well that she loved him.

On the evening of his arrival at Buyukdereh for the summer holidays Jimmy had a confidential talk with his mother about " Mr. Leith," whom he had not yet seen, but about whom he had been making many anxious inquiries.

" I'll tell you to-night," his mother had replied. And after dinner she fulfilled her promise.

" You'll see Mr. Leith to-morrow," she said.

" Well, I should rather think so ! " returned Jimmy, in an injured voice. " Where is he ? "

" He's living in rooms in the house of a Greek not far from here."

" I thought he was in the hotel. I say, mater, can't I have a cigarette just for once ? "

" Yes, you may, just for once."

Jimmy approached the cigarette box with the air of a nonchalant conqueror. As he opened it with an apparently practised forefinger he remarked :

" Well, mater ? "

" He's left the hotel. You know, Jimmy, Mr. Leith has had great misfortunes."

Jimmy had heard of the gun accident and its terrible result, and he now looked very grave.

"I know—poor chap!" he observed. "But it wasn't his fault. It was the little brute of a pony. Every one knows that. It was rotten bad luck, but who would be down on a fellow for bad luck?"

"Exactly. But it's changed Mr. Leith's life. His wife has left him. He's given up his business, and is, consequently, less well off than he was. But this isn't all."

Jimmy tenderly struck a match, lighted a cigarette, and, with half-closed eyes, blew forth in a professional manner a delicate cloud of smoke. He was feeling good all over.

"First-rate cigarettes!" he remarked. "The very best! Yes, mater?"

"He's rather badly broken up."

"No wonder!" said Jimmy, with discrimination.

"You'll find him a good deal changed. Sometimes he's moody and even bad-tempered, poor fellow, and he's fearfully sensitive. I'm trying my best to buck him up."

"Good for you, mater! He's our friend. We're bound to stand by him."

"And that's exactly what I'm trying to do. When he's a little difficult, doesn't take things quite as one means them—you know?"

"Rather! Do I?"

"I put it down to all the trouble he's been through. I never resent it. Now I ought really to have got out a holiday tutor for you."

"Oh, I say, after I've swotted my head off all these months! A chap needs some rest if he's to do himself justice, hang it, mater, now!"

"I know all about that!"

She looked at him shrewdly, and he smiled on one side of his mouth.

"Go on, mater!"

"But having Mr. Leith here I thought I wouldn't do that. Mr. Leith's awfully fond of boys, and it seemed to me you might do him more good than anyone else could."

"Well, I'm blowed! D'you really think so?"

Jimmy came over and sat on the arm of her chair, blowing rings of smoke cleverly over her lovely little head.

"Put me up to it, mater, there's a good girl. I'm awfully keen on Mr. Leith, as you know. He's got the biggest biceps I ever saw, and I'm jolly sorry for him. What can I do? Put me up to it."

And Mrs. Clarke proceeded to put Jimmy up to it. She

had told Dion that Jimmy wouldn't see the difference in him. Now she carefully prepared Jimmy to face that difference, and gave him his cue for the part she wished him to play. Jimmy felt very important as he listened to her explanations, trifling seriously with his cigarette, and looking very worldly-wise.

"I twig!" he interrupted occasionally, nodding his round young head, which was covered with densely thick, rather coarse hair. "I've got it."

And he went off to bed very seriously, resolved to take Mr. Leith in hand and to do his level best for him.

So it was that when Dion and he met next day he was not surprised at the change in Dion's appearance and manner. Nor were his young eyes merciless in their scrutiny. Just at first, perhaps, they stared with the unwinking observation of boyhood, but almost immediately Jimmy had taken the cue his mother had given him, and had entered into his part of a driver-away of trouble.

He played it well, with a tact that was almost remarkable in so young a boy; and Dion, ignorant of what Mrs. Clarke had done on the night of Jimmy's arrival, was at first surprised at the ease with which they got on together. He had dreaded Jimmy's coming, partly because of the secret he must keep from the boy, but partly also because of Robin. A boy's hands would surely tear at the wound which was always open. Sometimes Dion felt horribly sad when he was in contact with Jimmy's light-hearted and careless gaiety; sometimes he felt the gnawing discomfort of one not by nature a hypocrite forced into a passive hypocrisy; nevertheless there were moments when the burden of his life was made a little lighter on his shoulders by the confidence his young companion had in him, by the admiration for him showed plainly by Jimmy, by the leaping spirits which ardently summoned a reply in kind.

The subtlety of Mrs. Clarke, too, helped Dion at first.

Since her son's arrival, without ostentation she had lived for him. She entered into all Jimmy's plans, was ready to share his excitements and to taste, with him, those pleasures which were possible to a woman as well as to a boy. But she was quick to efface herself where she saw that she was not needed or might even be in the way. As a mother she was devoid of jealousy, was unselfish without seeming to be so. She did not parade her virtue. Her reticence was that of a perfectly finished artist. When she was wanted she was on

the spot ; when she was not wanted she disappeared. She sped Dion and Jimmy on their way to boating, shooting, swimming expeditions, with the happiest grace, and never assumed the look and manner of the patient woman "left behind."

Not once, since Jimmy's arrival, had she shown to Dion even a trace of the passionate and perverse woman he now knew her to be under her pale mask of self-controlled and very mental composure. At the hotel in Constantinople she had said to Dion, " All the time Jimmy's at Buyukdereh we'll just be friends." Now she seemed utterly to have forgotten that they had ever been what the world calls lovers, that they had been involved in scenes of passion, and brutality, and exhaustion, that they had torn aside the veil of reticence behind which women and men hide from each other normally the naked truth of what they can be. She treated Dion casually, though very kindly, as a friend, and never, even by a swift glance or a lingering touch of her fingers, reminded him of the fires that burned within her. Even when she was alone with him, when Jimmy ran off, perhaps, unexpectedly in the wake of a passing caprice, she never departed from her rôle of the friend who was before all things a mother.

So perfect was her hypocrisy, so absolutely natural in its manifestation, that sometimes, looking at her, Dion could scarcely forbear from thinking that she had forgotten all about their illicit connexion ; that she had put it behind her for ever ; that she was one of those happy people who possess the power of slaying the past and blotting the murder out of their memories.

That scene between them in Constantinople on the eve of Jimmy's arrival—had it ever taken place ? Had she really ever tried to strike him on the mouth ? Had he caught her wrist in a grip of iron ? It seemed incredible.

And if he was involved in a great hypocrisy since the boy's arrival he was released from innumerable lesser hypocrisies. His life at present was what it seemed to be to the little world on the Bosporus.

Just at first he did not realize that though Mrs. Clarke genuinely loved her son she was not too scrupulous to press his unconscious services in aid of her hypocrisy.

The holiday tutor whom she ought to have got out from England to improve the shining hour on Jimmy's behalf was replaced by Dion in the eyes of Mrs. Clarke's world.

One day she said to Dion :

"Will you do me a good turn?"

"Yes, if I can."

"It may bore you."

"What is it?"

"Read a little bit with Jimmy sometimes, will you? He's abominably ignorant, and will never be a scholar, but I should like him just to keep up his end at school."

"But I haven't got any school-books."

"I have. He's specially behindhand with his Greek. His report tells me that. If you'll do a little Greek grammar and construing with him in the mornings now and then, I shall be tremendously grateful. You see, owing to my miserable domestic circumstances, Jimmy is practically fatherless."

"And you ask me to take his father's place!" was in Dion's mind.

But she met his eyes so earnestly and with such sincerity that he only said:

"Of course I'll read with him in the mornings."

Despite the ardent protests of Jimmy Dion kept his promise. Soon Mrs. Clarke's numerous acquaintances knew of the morning hours of study. She had happened to tell Sir Carey Ingleton about Jimmy's backwardness in book-learning and Mr. Leith's kind efforts to "get him on during the holidays." Sir Carey had spoken of it to Cyril Vane. The thing "got about." The name of Dion Leith began to be connected rather with Jimmy Clarke than with Mrs. Clarke. Continually Dion and Jimmy were seen about together. Mrs. Clarke, meanwhile, often went among her friends alone, and when they asked about Jimmy she would say:

"Oh, he's gone off somewhere with Mr. Leith. I don't know where. Mr. Leith's a regular boy's man and was a great chum of Jimmy's in London; used to show him how to box and that sort of thing. It's partly for Jimmy that he came to Buyukdereh. They read together in the mornings. Mr. Leith's getting Jimmy on in Greek."

Sometimes she would add:

"Mr. Leith loves boys, and since his own child died so sadly I think he's taken to Jimmy more than ever."

Soon people began to talk of Dion Leith as "Jimmy Clarke's holiday tutor." Once, when this was said in Lady Ingleton's drawing-room at Therapia, she murmured:

"I don't think it quite amounts to that. Mr. Leith has never been a schoolmaster."

And there she left it, with a faint smile in which there was just the hint of an almost cynical sadness.

Since the trip to Brûsa on the " Leyla " she had thought a great deal about Dion Leith, and she was very sorry for him in a rather unusual way. Out of her happiness with her husband she seemed to draw an instinctive knowledge of what such a nature as Dion Leith's wanted and of the extent of his loss. Once she said to Sir Carey, with a sort of intensity such as she seldom showed :

" Good women do terrible things sometimes."

" Such as—— ? " said Sir Carey, looking at her almost with surprise in his eyes.

" I think Mrs. Leith has done a terrible thing to her husband."

" Perhaps she loved the child too much."

" Even love can be almost abominable," said Lady Ingleton. " If we had had a child, and you had done what poor Dion Leith has done, do you think I should have cast you out of my life ? "

" But—are you a good woman ? " he asked her, smiling.

" No, or you would never have bothered about me."

He touched her hand.

" When you do that," Lady Ingleton said, " I could almost cry over poor Dion Leith."

Sir Carey bent down and kissed her with a very tender gallantry.

" You and I are secretly sentimentalists, Delia," he said. " That is why we are so happy together."

" Why doesn't Dion Leith go to England ? " she exclaimed, almost angrily.

" Perhaps England seems full of his misery. Besides, his wife is there."

" He ought to go to her. He ought to force her to see the evil she is doing."

" Leith will never do that, I feel sure," said Sir Carey gravely. " And in his place I don't know that I could."

Lady Ingleton looked at him with an almost sharp impatience such as she seldom showed him.

" When a man has right on his side he ought to browbeat a woman ! " she exclaimed. " And even if he is in the wrong it's the best way to make a woman see things through his eyes. Dion Leith is too delicate with women."

After a moment she added :

" At any rate with some women, the first of whom is his

own wife. A man should always put up a big fight for a really big thing, and Dion Leith hasn't done that!"

"He fought in South Africa for England."

"Ah," she said, lifting her chin, "that sort of thing is so different."

"Tell him what you think," said the Ambassador.

"I know him so little. But perhaps—who knows—some day I shall."

She said no more on that subject.

Meanwhile Dion was teaching Jimmy, who was really full of the happiest ignorance. Jimmy's knowledge of Greek was a minus quantity, and he said frankly that he considered all that kind of thing "more or less rot." Nevertheless, Dion persevered. One morning when they were going to get to work as usual in the pavilion,—chosen by Mrs. Clarke as the suitable place for their studies,—taking up the Greek Grammar Dion opened it by chance at the verb "παύω." He stood by the table from which he had picked the book up staring down at the page. By one of those terrible rushes of which the mind is capable he was swept back to the famous mound which fronts the plain of Marathon; he saw the curving line of hills, the sea intensely blue and sparkling, empty of ships, the river's course through the tawny land marked by the tall reeds and the sedges; he heard the distant lowing of cattle coming from that old battlefield, celebrated by poets and historians. And then he heard, as if just above him, the dry crackle of brushwood — Rosamund moving in the habitation of Arcady. And he remembered the cry, the intense human cry which had echoed in the recesses of his soul on that day long—how long—ago in Greece, "Whither? Whither am I and my great love going? To what end are we journeying?"

He heard again that cry of his soul in the pavilion at Buyukdereh, and beneath the sunburn his lean cheeks went lividly pale.

Reluctantly Jimmy was getting an exercise book and a pen and ink out of the drawer of a table, which Mrs. Clarke had had specially made for the lessons by a little Greek carpenter who sometimes did odd jobs for her. He found the ink bottle almost empty.

"I say," he began.

He looked up.

"I say, Mr. Leith——"

His voice died away and he stared.

"What's wrong?" he managed to bring out at last.

He thrust out a hand and laid hold of the grammar. Dion let it go.

"παύω!" said Jimmy.

His eyes searched the page.

"There's nothing else. What's up, Mr. Leith?"

He looked frankly puzzled and almost afraid. He had never seen anyone look just like that before.

"This is only 'παύω,'" he continued, in a voice which, as he afterwards said to his mother, "sounded just like a rabbit's."

"I know it is," said Dion, in a stern voice.

"Well then——" said Jimmy.

He stopped. There was a moment of silence. Then, with a sudden change of manner, and in a different voice, Dion exclaimed:

"Come on, Jimmy! I don't feel like doing lessons this morning. I vote we go out. I'm going to ask your mother if we can ride to the Belgrâd forest. Perhaps she'll come with us."

He was suddenly afraid to remain alone with the boy, and he felt that he could not stay in that pavilion full of the atmosphere of feverish passion, of secrecy, of betrayal. Yes, of betrayal! For there he had betrayed the obstinate love, which he had felt at Marathon as a sort of ecstasy, and still felt, but now like a wound, within him in spite of Rosamund's rejection of him. Not yet had the current taken him and swept him away from all the old landmarks. Perhaps it never would. And yet he had given himself to it, he had not tried to resist.

Jimmy jumped up with alacrity, though he still looked rather grave and astonished. They went down the terraced garden to the villa.

"Run up and ask your mother," said Dion. "Probably she's in her sitting-room. I'll wait here to know what she says."

"Right you are!"

He went off, looking rather relieved.

Robin at fifteen! Dion shut his eyes.

Jimmy was away for more than ten minutes. Then he came back to say his mother would come with them to the forest and would be ready in an hour's time.

"I'll go back to my rooms, change into breeches, and order the horses," said Dion.

He was longing to get away from the scrutiny which at this moment Jimmy could not forgo. He knew that Jimmy had been talking about him to Mrs. Clarke, had probably been saying how "jolly odd" he had been in the pavilion. For once the boy's tact had failed him, and Dion's sensitiveness tingled.

An hour later they were on horseback and rode into the midst of the forest. At the village of Belgrâd they dismounted, left the horses in the care of a Turkish stableman, and went for a walk among the trees. It was very hot and still, and presently Mrs. Clarke said she would sit down and rest.

"You and Jimmy go on if you want to," she said.

But Jimmy threw himself down on the ground.

"I'm tired. It's so infernally hot."

"Take a nap," said his mother.

The boy laid his head on his curved arms sideways. Mrs. Clarke leaned down and put his panama hat over his left cheek and eye.

"Thank you, mater," he murmured.

He lay still.

Dion had stood by with an air of hesitation during this little talk between mother and son. Now he looked away to the forest.

"You go," Mrs. Clarke said to him. "You'll find us here when you come back. The Armenians call the forest *Defetgamm*. Perhaps you will come under its influence."

"*Defetgamm!* What does that mean?"

"Dispeller of care."

He stood looking at her for a moment; then, without another word, he turned quickly away and disappeared among the trees.

Jimmy slept with his face hidden, and Mrs. Clarke, with wide-open eyes, sat motionless staring into the forest.

When they reached the Villa Hafiz late in the afternoon Dion helped Mrs. Clarke to dismount. As she slid down lightly from the saddle she whispered, scarcely moving her lips:

"The pavilion to-night eleven. You've got the key."

She patted Selim's glossy black neck.

"Come, Jimmy!" she said. "Say good night to Mr. Leith. I'm sure he's tired and has had more than enough of us for to-day. We'll give him a rest from us till to-morrow."

And Jimmy bade Dion good-bye without any protest.

As Dion rode off Mrs. Clarke did not turn to look after him. She had not troubled even to question him with her eyes. She had assumed that he would do what she wanted. Would he do that ?

At first he believed that he would not go. He had been away in the forest with his misery for nearly two hours, struggling among the shadows of the trees. Jimmy had seen in the pavilion that morning that his "holiday tutor" was strangely ill at ease, and had discussed the matter with his mater, and asked her why on earth the sight of a page of Greek grammar should make a fellow stand staring as if he were confronted by a ghost. But Jimmy had no conception of what Dion had been through in the forest, where happy Greeks and Armenians were lazily enjoying the empty hours of summer, forgetting yesterday, and serenely careless of to-morrow.

In the forest Dion had fought with an old love of which he began to be angrily ashamed, with a love which was now his greatest enemy, a thing contemptible, inexplicable. In the pavilion that morning it had suddenly risen up before him strong, intense, passionate. It seemed irresistible. But he was almost furiously resolved not merely to resist it, but to crush it down, to break it in pieces, or to drive it finally out of his life.

And he had fought with it alone in the forest which the Armenians call *Defetgamm*. And in the forest something—some adherent, it seemed—had whispered to him, "To kill your enemy you must fill your armoury with weapons. The woman who came to you when you were neither in one world nor in the other is a weapon. Why have you ceased to use her ? "

And now, as if she had heard the voice of that adherent, and had known of the struggle in the forest, the woman herself had suddenly broken through the reserve she had imposed upon them both since the coming of her son.

In a hideous way Dion wanted her, and yet he shrank from going back to her secretly. The coming of Jimmy, his relations with the boy, the boy's hearty affection for him and admiration of him, had roused into intense activity that part of his nature which had always loved, which he supposed always must love, the straight life ; the life with morning face and clear, unfaltering eyes ; the life which the Hermes suggested, immune from the fret and fever of secret vices and passions, lifted by winged sandals into a region where soul

and body were in perfect accord, and where, because of that, there was peace ; not a peace of stagnation, but a peace living and intense. But that part of his nature led him even now instinctively back to the feet of Rosamund. And he revolted against such a pilgrimage.

" The pavilion to-night eleven ; you've got the key."

Her face had not changed as she whispered the words, and immediately afterwards she had told a lie to her boy, or had implied a lie. She had made Jimmy believe the thing that was not. Loving Jimmy, she did not scruple to play a part to him.

Dion ate no dinner that night. After returning to his rooms and getting out of his riding things into a loose serge suit he went out again and walked along the quay by the water. He paced up and down, ignoring the many passers-by, the boatmen and watermen who now knew him so well.

He was considering whether he should go to the pavilion at the appointed hour or whether he should leave Buyukdereh altogether and not return to it. This evening he was in the mood to be drastic. He might go down to Constantinople and finally cast his burden away there, never to take it up again—the burden of an old love whose chains still hung about him ; he might plunge into the lowest depths, into depths where perhaps the remembrance of Rosamund and the early morning would fade away from him, where even Mrs. Clarke would not care to seek for him, although her will was persistent.

He fully realized now her extraordinary persistence, the fierce firmness of character that was concealed by her quiet and generally impersonal manner. Certainly she had the temperament of a ruler. He remembered—it seemed to him with a bizarre abruptness—the smile on Dumeny's lips in the Divorce Court when the great case had ended in Mrs. Clarke's favour.

Did he really know Cynthia Clarke even now ?

He walked faster. Now he saw Hadi Bey before him, self-possessed, firm, with that curiously vivid look which had attracted the many women in Court.

And Jimmy believed in his mother. Perhaps, until Dion's arrival in Buyukdereh, the boy had had reason in his belief—perhaps not. Dion was very uncertain to-night.

A sort of cold curiosity was born in him. Until now he had accepted Mrs. Clarke's presentment of herself to the world, which included himself, as a genuine portrait ; now he began to recall the long speech of Beadon Clarke's counsel.

But the man had been only speaking according to his brief, had been only putting forth all the ingenuity and talent which enabled him to command immense fees for his services. And Mrs. Clarke had beaten him. The jury had said that she was not what he had asserted her to be.

Suppose they had made a mistake, had given the wrong verdict, why should that make any difference to Dion? He had definitely done with the goodness of good women. Why should he fear the evil of a woman who was bad? Perhaps in the women who were called evil by the respectable, or by those who were temperamentally inclined to purity, there was more warm humanity than the women possessed who never made a slip, or stepped out of the beaten path of virtue. Perhaps those to whom much must be forgiven were those who knew how to forgive.

If Mrs. Clarke really were what Beadon Clarke's counsel had suggested that she was, how would it affect him? Dion pondered that question on the quay. Mrs. Clarke's pale and very efficient hypocrisy, which he had been able to observe at close quarters since he had been at Buyukdereh, might well have been brought into play against himself, as it had been brought into play against the little world on the Bosporus and against Jimmy.

Dion made up his mind that he would go to the pavilion that night. The cold curiosity which had floated up to the surface of his mind enticed him. He wanted to know whether he was among the victims, if they could reasonably be called so, of Mrs. Clarke's delicate hypocrisy. He was still thinking of Mrs. Clarke as a weapon; he was also thinking that perhaps he did not yet know exactly what type of weapon she was. He must find that out to-night. Not even the thought of Jimmy should deter him.

At a few minutes before eleven he went back to his rooms, unlocked his dispatch box, and drew out the key of the gate of Mrs. Clarke's garden. He thrust it into his pocket and set out on the short walk to the Villa Hafiz. The night was dark and cloudy and very still. Dion walked quickly and surreptitiously, not looking at any of the people who went by him in the darkness. All the windows of the villa which faced the sea were shuttered and showed no lights. He turned to the right, stood before the garden gate and listened. He heard no sound except a distant singing on the oily waters of the Bay. Softly he put his key into the gate, gently unlocked it, stepped into the garden. A few minutes later he was on the

highest terrace and approached the pavilion. As he did so Mrs. Clarke came out of the drawing-room of the villa, passed by the fountain, and began to ascend the garden.

She was dressed in black and in a material that did not rustle. Her thin figure did not show up against the night, and her light slow footfall was scarcely audible on the paths and steps as she went upward. Jimmy had gone to bed long ago, tired out with the long ride in the heat. She had just been into his bedroom, without a light, and had heard his regular breathing. He was fast asleep, and once he was asleep he never woke till the light of day shone in at the window. It was a comfort that one could thoroughly rely on the sleeping powers of a healthy boy of fifteen.

She sighed as she thought about Jimmy. The boy was going to complicate her life. She was by nature an unusually fearless woman, but she was beginning to realize that there might come a time when she would know fear—unless she could begin to live differently as Jimmy began to grow up. But how could she do that? There are things which seem to be impossible even to strong wills. Her will was very strong, but she had always used it not to renounce but to attain, not to hold her desires in check but to bring them to fruition. And it was late in the day to begin reversing the powerful engine of her will. She was not even sure that she could reverse it. Hitherto she had never genuinely tried to do that. She did not want to try now, partly—but only partly—because she hated to fail in anything she undertook. And she had a suspicion, which she was not anxious to turn into a certainty, that she who had ruled many people was only a slave herself. Perhaps some day Jimmy would force her to a knowledge of her exact condition.

For the first time in her life she was half afraid of that mysterious energy which men and women call love; she began to understand, with a sort of ample fulness of comprehension, that of all loves the most determined is the love of a mother for her only son. A mother may, perhaps, have a son and not love him; but if once she loves him she holds within her a thing that will not die while she lives.

And if the thing that was without lust stood up in battle against the thing that was full of lust—what then?

The black and still night seemed a battlefield.

Softly she stepped upon the highest terrace and stood for a moment under the great plane tree, where was the wooden seat on which she had waited for Dion to weep away the past

and the good woman who had ruined his life. To-night she was invaded by an odd uncertainty. If she went to the pavilion and Dion were not there ? If he did not come ? Would some part of her, perhaps, be glad, the part that in a mysterious way was one with Jimmy ? She stared into the darkness, looking towards the pavilion. Dion Leith had once said she looked punished. Perhaps when he had said that he had shown that he had intuition.

Was he there ? It was past eleven now. She had assumed that he would come, and she was inclined to believe that he had come. If so she need not see him even now. There was still time for her to go back to the villa, to shut herself in, to go to bed, as Jimmy had gone to bed. But if she did that she would not sleep. All night long she would lie wide awake tossing from side to side, the helpless prey of her past life.

She frowned and slipped through the darkness, almost like a fluid, to the pavilion.

## CHAPTER VIII

SHE came so silently that Dion heard nothing till against the background of the night he saw a shadow, her thin body, a faint whiteness, her face, motionless at the opening of the pavilion ; from this shadow and this whiteness came a voice which said :

" Did you come under the influence of *Defetgamm* ? "

" It's impossible that you see me ! " he said.

" I see you plainly with some part of me, not my eyes."

He got up from the divan where he had been sitting in the dark and went to the opening of the pavilion.

" Did you come under the influence of *Defetgamm* ? " she repeated.

" You know I didn't."

He paused, then added :

" I nearly didn't come to-night."

" And I nearly went down, after I had come up here, without seeing you. And yet—we are together again."

" Why do you want to see me here ? We agreed——"

" Yes, we agreed ; but after to-day in the forest that agreement had to be broken. When you left me under the

trees you looked like a man who was thinking of starting on a very long journey."

She spoke with a peculiar significance which at once conveyed her full meaning to him.

"No, I shall never do that," he said. "If I had been capable of it, I should have done it long ago."

"Yes? Let me in."

He moved. She slipped into the pavilion and sat down.

"How can you move without making any sound?" he asked sombrely.

There had been in her movement a sort of perfection of surreptitiousness that was animal. He noticed it, and thought that she must surely be accustomed to moving with precaution lest she should be seen or heard. Rosamund could not move like that. A life story seemed to him to be faintly traced in Mrs. Clarke's manner of entering the pavilion and of sitting down on the divan.

He stood beside her in the dark. She returned no answer to his question.

"You spoke of a journey," he said. "The only journey I have thought of making is short enough—to Constantinople. I nearly started on it to-night."

"Why do you want to go to Constantinople?"

He was silent.

"What would you do there?"

"Ugly things, perhaps."

"Why didn't you go? What kept you?"

"I felt that I must ask you something."

He sat down beside her and took both her hands roughly. They were dry and burning as if with fever.

"You trick Jimmy," he said. "You trick the Ingletons, Vane, all the people here——"

"Trick!" she interrupted coldly, almost disdainfully. "What do you mean?"

"That you deceive them, take them in."

"What about?"

"You know quite well."

After a pause, which was perhaps—he could not tell—a pause of astonishment, she said:

"Do you really expect me to go about telling every one that I, a lonely woman, separated from my husband, unable to marry again, have met a man whom I care for, and that I've been weak enough—or wicked enough, if you like—to let him know it?"

Dion felt his cheeks burn in the darkness. Nevertheless, something drove him on, forced him to push his way hardily through a sort of quickset hedge of reluctance and shame.

"No, I don't expect absurdities. I am not such a fool. But—but you do it so well!"

"Do what well?"

"Everything connected with deception. You are such a mistress of it."

"Well?"

"Isn't that rather strange?"

"Do you expect a woman like me, a woman who can't pretend to stupidity, and who has lived for years in the diplomatic world, to blunder in what she undertakes?"

"No, I don't. But you are too competent."

He spoke with hard determination, but his cheeks were still burning.

"It's impossible to be too competent. If I make up my mind that a thing must be done I resolve to do it thoroughly and to do it well. I despise blunderers and women who are afraid of what they do. I despise those who give themselves and others away. I cared for you. I saw you needed me and I gave myself to you. I am not sorry I did it, not a bit sorry. I had counted the cost before I did it."

"Counted the cost? But what cost is there? Neither of us loses anything."

"I risk losing almost everything a woman cares for. I don't want to dwell upon it. I detest women who indulge in reproaches, or who try to make men value them by pointing out how much they stand to lose by giving themselves. But you are so strange to-night. You have attacked me. I don't know why."

"I've been walking on the quay and thinking."

"What about?"

"You!"

"Go on."

"I've been thinking that, as you take in Jimmy and all the people here so easily, there is no reason why you shouldn't be taking me in too."

In the dark a feeling was steadily growing within him that his companion was playing with him as he knew she had played with others.

"I'm forced to deceive the people here and my boy. My relation with you obliges me to do that. But nothing forces me to deceive you. I have been sincere with you. Ever

since I met you in the street in Pera I've been sincere, even blunt. I should think you must have noticed it."

"I have. In some ways you are blunt, but in many you aren't."

"What is it exactly that you wish to know?"

For a moment Dion was silent. In the darkness of the pavilion he saw Dumeny's lips smiling faintly, Hadi Bey's vivid, self-possessed eyes, the weak mouth of Brayfield and his own double. Was he a member of an ugly brotherhood, or did he stand alone? He wanted to know, yet he felt that he could not put such a hideous question to his companion.

"Tell me exactly what it is," she said. "Don't be afraid. I wish to be quite sincere with you, though you think I don't. It is no pleasure to me to deceive people. What I do in the way of deception I do in self-defence. Circumstances often push us into doing what we don't enjoy doing. But you and I ought to be frank with one another."

Her hands tightened on his.

"Go on. Tell me."

"I've been wondering whether your husband ought to have won his case," said Dion, in a low voice.

"Is that all?" she said, very simply and without any emotion.

"All?"

"Yes. Do you suppose, when I gave myself to you, I didn't realize that my doing it was certain to make you doubt my virtue? Dion, you don't know how boyish you still are. You will always be in some ways a boy. I knew you would doubt me after all that had happened. But what is the good of asking questions of a woman whom you doubt? If I am what you suspect, of course I shall tell you lies. If I am not, what is the good of my telling you the truth? What is to make you believe it?"

He was silent. She moved slightly and he felt her thin body against his side. What sort of weapon was she? That was the great question for him. Since his struggle in the forest of *Defetgamm* he had come to the resolve to strike fierce and reiterated blows on that disabling and surely contemptible love of his, that love which had confronted him like a spectre when he was in the pavilion with Jimmy. He was resolved at last upon assassination, and he wanted a weapon that could slay, not a weapon that would bend, or perhaps break, in his hand.

" I don't want to believe I am only one among many," he said at last.

The sound of his voice gave her the cue to his inmost feeling. She had been puzzled in the forest, she had been half afraid, seeing that he had arrived at an acute emotional crisis and not understanding what had brought him to it. She did not understand that now, but she knew that he was asking from her more than he had ever asked before. He had been cast out and now he was knocking hard on her door. He was knocking, but lingering remnants of the influence of the woman who had coloured his former life hung about him like torn rags, and his hands instinctively felt for them, pulled at them, to cover his nakedness. Still, while he knocked, he looked back to the other life. Nevertheless—she knew this with all there was of woman in her—he wanted from her all that the good woman had never given to him, was incapable of giving to him or to anyone. He wanted from her, perhaps, powers of the body which would suffice finally for the killing of those powers of the soul by which he was now tormented ceaselessly. The sound of his voice demanded from her something no other man had ever demanded from her, the slaughter in him of what he had lived by through all his years. Nevertheless he was still looking back to all the old purities, was still trying to hear all the old voices. He required of her, as it were, that she should be good in her evil, gentle while she destroyed. Well, she would even be that. A rare smile curved her thin lips, but he did not see it.

" Suppose I told you that you were one of many ? " she said. " Would you give it all up ? "

" I don't know. Am I ? "

" No. Do you think, if you were, I should have kept my women friends, Tippie Chetwinde, Delia Ingleton and all the rest ? "

" I suppose not," he said.

But he remembered tones in Mrs. Chetwinde's voice when she had spoken of " Cynthia Clarke," and even tones in Lady Ingleton's voice.

" They stuck to me because they believed in me. What other reason could they have ? "

" Unless they were very devoted to you."

" Women aren't much given to that sort of thing," she said dryly.

" I think you have an unusual power of making people do

what you wish. It is like an emanation," he said slowly. "And it seems not to be interfered with by distance."

She leaned till her cheek touched his.

"Dion, I wish to make you forget. I know how it is with you. You suffer abominably because you can't forget. I haven't succeeded with you yet. But wait, only wait, till Jimmy goes, till the summer is over and we can leave the Bosporus. It's all too intimate—the life here. We are all too near together. But in Constantinople I know ways. I'll stay there all the winter for you. Even the Christmas holidays—I'll give them up for once. I want to show you that I do care. For no one else on earth would I give up being with Jimmy in his holidays. For no one else I'd risk what I'm risking to-night."

"Jimmy was asleep when you came?"

"Yes, but he might wake. He never does, but he might wake just to-night."

"Suppose he did! Suppose he looked for you in your room and didn't find you! Suppose he came up here!"

"He won't!"

She spoke obstinately, almost as if her assertion of the thing's impossibility must make it impossible.

"And yet there's the risk of it," said Dion—"the great risk."

"There are always risks in connexion with the big things in life. We are worth very little if we won't take them."

"If it wasn't for Jimmy would you come and live with me? Would you drop all this deception? would you let your husband divorce you? would you give up your place in society for me? I am an outcast. Would you come and be an outcast with me?"

"Yes, if it wasn't for Jimmy."

"And for Jimmy you'd give me up for ever in a moment, wouldn't you?"

"Why do you ask these questions," she said, almost fiercely.

"I want something for myself, something that's really mine. Then perhaps——"

He stopped.

"Perhaps what?"

"Perhaps I could forget—sometimes."

"And yet when you knew Jimmy was coming here you wanted to go away. You were afraid then. And even to-day——"

"I want one thing or the other!" he interrupted desperately. "I'm sick of mixing up good and bad. I'm sick of prevarications and deceptions. They go against my whole nature. I hate struggling in a net. It saps all my strength."

"I know. I understand."

She put her arm round his neck.

"Perhaps I ought to give you up, let you go. I've thought that. But I haven't had the courage. Dion, I'm lonely, I'm lonely."

He felt moisture on his cheek.

"About you I'm absolutely selfish," she said, in a low, swift voice. "Even if all this hypocrisy hurts you I can't give you up. I've told you a lie—even you."

"When?"

"I said to you on *that* night——"

She waited.

"I know," he said.

"I said that I hadn't cared for you till I met you in Pera, and saw what *she* had done to you. That was a lie. I cared for you in England. Didn't you know it?"

"Once or twice I wondered, but I was never at all sure."

"It was because I cared that I wanted to make friends with your wife. I had no evil reason. I knew you and she were perfectly happy together. But I wanted just to see you sometimes. She guessed it. That was why she avoided me—the real reason. It wasn't only because I'd been involved in a scandal, though I told you once it was. I've sometimes lied to you because I didn't want to feel myself humiliated in your eyes. But now I don't care. You can know all the truth if you want to. You pushed me away—oh, very gently—because of her. Did you think I didn't understand? You were afraid of me. Perhaps you thought I was a nuisance. When I came back from Paris on purpose for Tippie Chetwinde's party you were startled, almost horrified, when you saw me. I saw it all so plainly. In the end, as you know, I gave it up. Only when you went to the war I had to send that telegram. I thought you might be killed, and I wanted you to know I was remembering you, and admiring you for what you had done. Then you came with poor Brayfield's letter——"

She broke off, then added, with a long, quivering sigh:

"You've made me suffer, Dion."

"Have I?"

He turned till he was facing her in the darkness.

"Then at last you were overtaken by your tragedy, and she showed you her cruelty and cast you out. From that moment I was resolved some day to let you know how much I cared. I wanted you in your misery. But I waited. I had a conviction that you would come to me, drawn, without suspecting it, by what I felt for you. Well, you came at last. And now you ask me whether you are one of many."

"Forgive me!" he whispered.

"But of course I shall always forgive you for everything. Women who care for men always do that. They can't help themselves. And you—will you forgive me for my lies?"

He took her in his arms.

"Life's full of them. Only don't tell me any more, and make me forget if you can. You've got so much will. Try to have the power for that."

"Then help me. Give yourself wholly to me. You have struggled against me furtively. You thought I didn't know it, but I did. You look back to the old ways. And that is madness. Turn a new page, Dion. Have the courage to hope."

"To—hope!"

Her hot hands closed on him fiercely.

"You shall hope. I'll make you. Cut out the cancer that is in you, and cut away all that is round it. Then you'll have health again. She never knew how to feel in the great human way. She was too fond of God ever to care for a man."

He said no word in defence of Rosamund. Deliberately he was traitor to her. At that moment he felt that if he defended her the old habit of life would assert upon him again its terrible, its devastating power.

"She was too fond of God ever to care for a man."

Let that be the epitaph over the tomb in which all his happiness was buried.

In silence he made his decision, and Cynthia Clarke knew it.

The darkness covered them.

. . . . . .

Down below in the Villa Hafiz Jimmy was sleeping peacefully, tired by the long ride to and from the forest in the heat. He had gone to bed very early, almost directly after dinner. His mother had not advised this. Perhaps indeed, if she had not been secretly concentrated on herself and her own desires that evening, she would have made Jimmy stay up till at least half past ten, even though he was "jolly

sleepy." He had slept for at least two hours in the forest. She ought to have remembered that, but she had forgotten it, and when, at a quarter to nine, on an enormous yawn, Jimmy had announced that he thought he would "turn in and get between the sheets," she had almost eagerly acquiesced. She wanted her boy asleep, soundly asleep that night. When the clock had struck nine he had already travelled beyond the land of dreams.

The night was intensely hot and airless. No breath of wind came from the sea. Drops of perspiration stood on the boy's forehead as he slept, with nothing over him but a sheet. He lay on his side, with his face towards the open window and one arm outside the sheet.

People easily fall into habits of sleeping. Jimmy was accustomed to sleep for about eight hours "on end," as he put it. When he had had his eight hours he generally woke up. If he was not obliged to get up he often went to sleep again after an interval of wakefulness, but he seldom slept for as much as nine hours without waking.

On this night between two o'clock and three it seemed as if a layer of sleep were gently lifted from him. He sighed, stirred, turned over and began to dream.

He dreamed confusedly about Dion, and there were pain and apprehension in his dream. In it Dion seemed to be himself and yet not himself, to be near and at the same time remote, to be Jimmy's friend and yet, in some strange and horrible way, hostile to Jimmy. No doubt the boy was haunted in his sleep by an obscure phantom bred of that painful impression of the morning, when his friend had suddenly been changed in the pavilion, changed into a tragic figure from which seemed to emanate impalpable things very black and very cold.

In the dream Jimmy's mother did not appear as an active figure ; yet the dreamer seemed somehow to be aware of her, to know faintly that she was involved in unhappy circumstances, that she was the victim of distresses he could not fathom. And these distresses weighed upon him like a burden, as things weigh upon us in dreams, softly and heavily, and with a sort of cloudy awfulness. He wanted to strive against them for his mother, but he was held back from action, and Dion seemed to have something to do with this. It was as if his friend and enemy, Dion Leith, did not wish his mother to be released from unhappiness.

Jimmy moved, lay on his back and groaned. His eyelids

fluttered. Something from without, something from a distance, was pulling at him, and the hands of sleep, too inert, perhaps, for any conflict, relaxed their hold upon him. Thoughts from two minds in a dark pavilion were stealing upon him, were touching him here and there, were whispering to him.

Another layer of sleep was softly removed from him.

He clenched his large hands—he had already the hands and feet almost of the man he would some day grow into—and his eyes opened wide for a moment. But they closed again. He was not awake yet.

At three o'clock he woke. He had slept for six hours in the villa and for two hours in the forest. He lay still in the dark for a few minutes. A faint memory of his dream hung about him like a tattered mist. He felt anxious, almost apprehensive, and strained his ears expectant of some sound. But the silence of the airless night was deep and large all about him. He began to think of his mother. What had been the matter with her? Who, or what, had persecuted her? He realized now that he had been dreaming, said to himself, with a boy's exaggeration, that he had had "a beastly nightmare!" Nevertheless his mother still appeared to him as the victim of distresses. He could not absolutely detach himself from the impressions communicated to him in his dream. He was obliged to think of his mother as unhappy and of Dion Leith as not wholly friendly either to her or to himself. And it was all quite beastly.

Presently, more fully awake, he began to wonder about the time and to feel tremendously thirsty, as if he could "drink the jug."

He stretched out a hand, found the matches and struck a light. It went out with a sort of feeble determination.

"Damn!" he muttered.

He struck another match and lit the candle. His silver watch lay beside it, and marked five minutes past three. Jimmy was almost angrily astonished. Only that! He now felt painfully wide awake, as if his sleep were absolutely finished. What was to be done? He remembered that he had slept in the forest. He had had his eight hours. Perhaps that was the reason of his present wakefulness. Anyhow, he must have a drink. He thrust away the sheet, rolled out of bed, and went to the washhand-stand. There was plenty of water in his bottle, but when he poured it into the tumbler he found that it was quite warm. He was certain warm

his mother ravished away from him by unspeakable men—Turks, Armenians, Greeks, Albanians—God knows whom—and carried off to some unknown and frightful fate; he saw her dead, murdered; he saw her dead, stricken by some sudden and horrible illness. His heart thumped. He could hear it. It seemed to be beating in his ears. And then he began to feel brave, to feel an intrepidity of desperation. He must act. That was certain. It was his obvious business to jolly well get to work and do something. His first thought was to rush upstairs, to rouse the servants, to call up Sonia, his mother's confidential maid, to—the pavilion!

Suddenly he remembered the pavilion, and all the books on its shelves. His mother might be there. She might have been sleepless, might have felt sure she couldn't sleep, and so have stayed up. She might be reading in the pavilion, or perhaps sitting out in the garden in the darkness. She was afraid of nothing. Darkness and solitude wouldn't hinder her from wandering about if the fancy to wander took her. She wouldn't, of course, go outside the gates, but—he now felt sure she was somewhere in the garden.

He looked round. He was standing by the grand piano in the drawing-room, and he now noticed for the first time that the French window which gave on to the rose garden was open. That settled it. He put the candle down, hurried out into the garden and called, "Mater!"

No voice replied except the fountain's voice. The purring water rose in the darkness and fell among the lilies, rose and fell, active and indifferent, like a living thing withdrawn from him, wrapped in its own mystery.

"Mater!" he called again, in a louder, more resolute, voice. "Mater! Mater!"

. . . . . .

In an absolutely still night a voice can travel very far. On the highest terrace of the garden in the blackness of the pavilion Mrs. Clarke moved sharply. She sat straight up on the divan, rigid, with her hands pressed palm downwards on the cushions. Dion had heard nothing, and did not understand the reason for her abrupt, almost violent, movement.

"Why . . .?" he began.

She caught his wrist and held it tightly, compressing her fingers on it with a fierce force that amazed him.

"Mater!"

Had he really heard the word, or had he imagined it?

"Mater!"

He had heard it.

"It's Jimmy!"

She had her thin lips close to his ear. She still held his wrist in a grip of iron.

"He's at the bottom of the garden. He'll come up here. He won't wait. Go down and meet him."

"But——"

"Go down! I'll hide among the trees. Let him come up here, or bring him up. He must come. Be sure he comes inside. While you go I'll light the lamp. I can do it in a moment. You couldn't sleep. You came here to read. Of course you know nothing about me. Keep him here for five or ten minutes. You can come down then and help him to look for me. Go at once."

She took away her hand.

"My whole future depends upon you!"

Dion got up and went out. As he went he heard her strike a match.

Scarcely knowing for a moment what he was doing, acting mechanically, in obedience to instinct, but always feeling a sort of terrible driving force behind him, he traversed the terrace on which the pavilion stood, passed the great plane tree and the wooden seat, and began to descend. As he did so he heard again Jimmy's voice crying:

"Mater!"

"Jimmy!" he called out, in a loud voice, hurrying on.

As the sound died away he knew it had been nonchalant. Surely she had made it so!

"Jimmy!" he called again. "What's up? What's the matter?"

There was no immediate reply, but in the deep silence Dion heard hurrying steps, and then:

"Mr. Leith!"

"Hallo!"

"Mr. Leith—it is you, is it?"

"Yes. What on earth's the matter?"

"Stop a sec! I——"

The feet were bounding upward. Almost directly, in pyjamas and the slippers, which somehow still remained with him, Jimmy stood by Dion in the dark, breathing hard.

"Jimmy, what's the matter? What has happened?"

"I say, why are you here?"

"I couldn't sleep. The night was so hot. I had nothing to read in my rooms. Besides, they're stuck down right

against the quay. You know your mother's kind enough to let me have a key of the garden gate. I thought I might get more air on the top terrace. I was reading in the pavilion when I thought I heard a call."

"Then the mater isn't there?"

"Your mother?"

"Yes!"

"Of course not. Come on up!"

Dion took the boy by the arm with decision, and slowly led him upwards.

"What's this about your mother? Do you mean she isn't asleep?"

"Asleep? She isn't in her bedroom! She hasn't been there!"

"Hasn't been there?"

"Hasn't been to bed at all! I've been to her sitting-room—you know, upstairs—she isn't there. I've been in all the rooms. She isn't anywhere. She must be somewhere about here."

They had arrived in front of the pavilion backed by trees. Looking in, Dion saw a lighted lamp. The slide of jewelled glass had been removed from it. A white ray fell on an open book laid on a table.

"I was reading here"—he looked—"a thing called 'The Kasîdah.' Sit down!" He pulled the boy down. "Now what is all this? Your mother must be in the house."

"But I tell you she isn't!"

Dion had sat down between Jimmy and the opening on to the terrace. It occurred to him that he ought to have induced the boy to sit with his back to the terrace and his face turned towards the room. It was too late to do that now.

"I tell you she isn't!" Jimmy repeated, with a sort of almost fierce defiance.

He was staring hard at Dion. His hair was almost wildly disordered, and his face looked pale and angry in the ray of the lamp. Dion felt that there was suspicion in his eyes. Surely those eyes were demanding of him the woman who was hiding among the trees.

"Where have you looked?" he said.

"I tell you I've looked everywhere," said Jimmy doggedly.

"Did your mother go up to bed when you did?"

"No. I went very early. I was so infernally sleepy."

"Where did you leave her?"

"In the drawing-room. She was playing the piano. But what's the good of that? What time did you come here?"

"I! Oh, not till very late indeed."

"Were there any lights showing when you came?"

"Lights? No! But it was ever so much too late for that."

"Did you go on to the terrace by the drawing-room?"

"No. I came straight up here. It never occurred to me that anyone would be up at such an hour. Besides, I didn't want to disturb anyone, especially your mother."

"Well, just now I found the drawing-room window wide open, and mater's bed hasn't been touched. What do you make of that?"

Before Dion could reply the boy abruptly started up.

"I heard something. I know I did."

As naturally as he could Dion got between Jimmy and the opening on to the terrace, and, forestalling the boy, looked out. He saw nothing; he could not have said with truth that any definite sound reached his ears; but he felt that at that exact moment Mrs. Clarke escaped from the terrace, and began to glide down towards the house below.

"There's nothing! Come and see for yourself," he said casually.

Jimmy pushed by him, then stood perfectly still, staring at the darkness and listening intently.

"I don't hear it now!" he acknowledged gruffly.

"What did you think you heard?"

"I *did* hear something. I couldn't tell you what it was."

"Have you looked all through the garden?"

"You know I haven't. You heard me calling down at the bottom. You must have, because you answered me."

"We'd better have a good look now. Just wait one minute while I put out the lamp. I'll put away the book I was reading, too."

"Right you are!" said the boy, still gruffly.

He waited on the terrace while Dion went into the pavilion. As Dion took up "The Kasîdah" he glanced down at the page at which Mrs. Clarke had chanced to set the book open, and read:

> "Do what thy manhood bids thee do, from
> None but self expect applause——"

With a feeling of cold and abject soul-nausea he shut

the book, put it away on a bookshelf in which he saw a gap, and went to turn out the lamp. As the flame flickered and died out he heard Jimmy's foot shift on the terrace.

"Do what thy manhood bids thee do——"

Dion stood for a moment in the dark. He was in a darkness greater than any which reigned in the pavilion. His soul seemed to him to be pressing against it, to be hemmed in by it as by towering walls of iron. For an instant he shut his eyes. And when he did that he saw, low down, a little boy's figure, two small outstretched hands groping.

Robin!

"Aren't you coming, Mr. Leith? What's the matter?"

"I was just seeing that the lamp was thoroughly out."

"Well——"

Dion came out.

"We'll look all over the garden. But if your mother had been in it she must have heard you calling her. I did, although I was inside there reading."

"I know. I thought of that too," returned Jimmy.

And Dion fancied that the boy's voice was very cold; Dion fancied this but he was not sure. His conscience might be tricking him. He hoped that it was tricking him.

"We'd better look among the trees," he said. "And then we'll go to the terrace below."

"It's no use looking among the trees," Jimmy returned. "If she was up here she must have heard us talking all this time."

Abruptly he led the way to the steps near the plane tree. Dion followed him slowly. Was it possible that Jimmy had guessed? Was it possible that Jimmy had caught a glimpse of his mother escaping? The boy's manner was surely almost hostile.

They searched the garden in silence, and at length found themselves by the fountain close to the French window of the drawing-room.

"Your mother must be in the house," said Dion firmly.

"But I know she isn't!" Jimmy retorted, with a sort of dull fixed obstinacy.

"Did you rouse the servants?"

"No."

"Where do they sleep?"

"Away from us, by themselves."

"You'd better go and look again. If you can't find your mother perhaps you'd better wake the servants."

"I know," said Jimmy, in a voice that had suddenly changed, become brighter, more eager—"I'll go to Sonia."

"Your mother's maid? That's it. She may know something. I'll wait down here at the window. Got a candle?"

"Yes. I left it in there by the piano."

He felt his way in and, almost immediately, struck a light. The candle flickered across his face and his disordered hair as he disappeared.

Dion waited by the fountain.

Where would Mrs. Clarke be? How would she explain matters? Would she have had time to——? Oh yes! She would have had time to be ready with some quite simple, yet quite satisfactory, piece of deception. Jimmy would find her, and she would convince him of all that it was necessary he should be convinced of.

Dion's chin sank down and his head almost drooped. He felt mortally tired as he waited here. Already a very faint greyness of the coming dawn was beginning to filter in among the darknesses.

Another day to face! How could he face it? He had, he supposed, been what is called "true" to the woman who had given herself to him, but how damnably false he had been to himself that night!

Meanwhile Jimmy went upstairs, frowning and very pale. He went again to his mother's bedroom and found it empty. The big bed, turned down, had held no sleeper. Nothing had been changed in the room since he had been away in the garden. He did not trouble to look once more into the adjoining sitting-room, but hurried towards the servants' quarters. The double doors were shut. Softly he opened them and passed through into a wooden corridor. At the far end of it were two rooms sacred to Sonia, the Russian maid. The first room she slept in; the second was a large airy chamber lined with cupboards. In this she worked. She was a very clever needlewoman, expert in the mysteries of dressmaking.

As Jimmy drew near to the door of Sonia's workroom he heard a low murmur of voices coming from within. Evidently Sonia was there, talking to some one. He crept up and listened.

Very tranquil the voices sounded. They were talking in French. One was his mother's, and he heard her say:

"Another five minutes, Sonia, and perhaps I shall be

ready for bed. At last I'm beginning to feel as if I might be able to sleep. If only I were like Jimmy! He doesn't know anything about the torments of insomnia."

"Poor Madame!" returned Sonia, in her rather thick, but pleasantly soft, voice. "Your head a little back. That's better!"

Jimmy was aware of an odd, very faint, sound. He couldn't make out what it was.

"Mater!" he said.

And he tapped on the door.

"Who's that?" said Sonia's voice.

"It's Jimmy!"

The door was opened by the maid, and he saw his mother in a long, very thin white dressing-gown, seated in an arm-chair before a mirror. Her colourless hair flowed over the back of the chair, against which her little head was leaning, supported by a silk cushion. Her face looked very white and tired, and the lids drooped over her usually wide-open eyes, giving her a strange expression of languor, almost of drowsiness. Sonia held a silver-backed brush in each hand.

"Monsieur Jimmy!" she said.

"Jimmy!" said Mrs. Clarke. "What's the matter?"

She lifted her head from the cushion, and sat straight up. But she still looked languid.

"What is it? Are you ill?"

"No, mater! But I've been looking for you everywhere!"

There was a boyish reproach in his voice.

"Looking for me in the middle of the night! Why?"

Jimmy began to explain matters.

"At last I thought I'd look in the garden. I shouted out for you, and who should answer but Mr. Leith?" he presently said.

His mother—he noticed it—woke up fully at this point in the narrative.

"Mr. Leith!" she said, with strong surprise. "How could he answer you?"

"He was up in the pavilion reading a book."

Mrs. Clarke looked frankly astonished. Her eyes travelled to Sonia, whose broad face was also full of amazement.

"At this hour!" said Mrs. Clarke.

"He couldn't sleep either," said Jimmy, quite simply. "He's waiting out there now to know whether I've found you."

Mrs. Clarke smiled faintly.

"What a to do!" she said, with just a touch of gentle disdain. "And all because I suffer from insomnia. Run down to him, Jimmy, and tell him that as I felt it was useless to go to bed I sat by the fountain till I was weary, then read in my sitting-room, and finally came to Sonia to be brushed into sleep. Set his mind at rest about me if you can."

She smiled again.

Somehow that smile made Jimmy feel very small.

"And go back to bed, dear boy."

She put out one hand, drew him to her, and gave him a gentle kiss with lips which felt very calm.

"I'm sorry you were worried about me."

"Oh, that's all right, mater!" said Jimmy, rather awkwardly. "I didn't know what to think. You see——"

"Of course you couldn't guess I was having my hair brushed. Now go straight to bed, after you've told Mr. Leith. I'm coming too in a minute."

As Jimmy left the room Sonia was again at work with the two hair-brushes.

A moment later Jimmy reappeared at the French window of the drawing-room. Dion lifted his head, but did not move from the place where he was standing close to the fountain.

"It's all right, Mr. Leith," said Jimmy. "I've found mater."

"Where was she?"

"In Sonia's room having her hair brushed."

Dion stared towards him but said nothing.

"She told me I was to set your mind at rest."

"Did she?"

"Yes. I believe she thought us a couple of fools for kicking up such a dust about her."

Dion said nothing.

"I don't know, but I've an idea girls and women often think they can laugh at us," added Jimmy. "Anyhow, it'll be a jolly long time before I put myself in a sweat about the mater again. I thought—I don't know what I thought, and all the time she was half asleep and having her hair brushed. She made me feel ass number one. Good night."

"Good night."

The boy shut the window, bent down and bolted it on the inside.

Dion looked at the grey coming of the new day.

## CHAPTER IX

LIVERPOOL has a capacity for looking black which is, perhaps, only surpassed by Manchester's, and it looked its blackest on a day at the end of March in the following year, as the afternoon express from London roared into the Lime Street Station. The rain was coming down ; it was small rain, and it descended with a sort of puny determination ; it was sad rain without any dash, any boldness ; it had affinities with the mists which sweep over stretches of moorland, but its power of saturation was remarkable. It soaked Liverpool. It issued out of blackness and seemed to carry a blackness with it which descended into the very soul of the city and lay coiled there like a snake.

Lady Ingleton was very sensitive to her surroundings, and as she lifted the rug from her knees, and put away the book she had been reading, she shivered. A deep melancholy floated over her and enveloped her. She thought, "Why did I come upon this adventure? What is it all to do with me?" But then the face of a man rose up before her, lean, brown, wrinkled, ravaged, with an expression upon it that for a long time had haunted her, throwing a shadow upon her happiness. And she felt that she had done right to come. Impulse, perhaps, had driven her; sentiment rather than reason had been her guide. Nevertheless, she did not regret her journey. Even if nothing good came of it she would not regret it. She would have tried for once at some small expense to herself to do a worthy action. She would for once have put all selfishness behind her.

A white-faced porter, looking anxious and damp, appeared at the door of the corridor. Lady Ingleton's French maid arrived from the second class with Turkish Jane on her arm.

"Oh, Miladi, how black it is here!" she exclaimed, twisting her pointed little nose. "The black it reaches the heart."

That was exactly what Lady Ingleton was thinking, but she said, in a voice less lazy than usual :

"There's a capital hotel, Annette. We shall be very comfortable."

"Shall we stay here long, Miladi?"

"No ; but I don't know how long yet. Is Jane all right?"

"She has been looking out of the window, Miladi, the whole way. She is in ecstasy. Dogs have no judgment, Miladi."

When Lady Ingleton was in her sitting-room at the Adelphi Hotel, and had had the fire lighted and tea brought up, she asked to see the manager for a moment. He came almost immediately, a small man, very smart, very trim, self-possessed as an attaché.

"I hope you are quite comfortable, my lady," he said, in a thin voice which held no note of doubt. "Can I do anything for you?"

"I wanted to ask you if you knew the address of some one I wish to send a note to—Mr. Robertson. He's a clergyman who——"

"Do you mean Father Robertson, of Holy Cross, Manxby Street, my lady?"

"Of Holy Cross; yes, that's it."

"He lives at——"

"Wait a moment. I'll take it down."

She went to the writing-table and took up a pen.

"Now, please!"

"The Rev. George Robertson, Holy Cross Rectory, Manxby Street, my lady."

"Thank you very much."

"Can I do anything more for you, my lady?"

"Please send me up a messenger in twenty minutes. Mr. Robertson is in Liverpool, I understand?"

"I believe so, my lady. He is generally here. Holidays and pleasure are not much in his way. The messenger will be up in twenty minutes."

He looked at the clock on the mantelpiece and went softly out, holding himself very erect.

Lady Ingleton sat down by the tea-table. Annette was unpacking in the adjoining bedroom, and Turkish Jane was reposing in an arm-chair near the hearth.

"What would Carey think of me, if he knew?" was her thought, as she poured out the tea.

Sir Carey was at his post in Constantinople. She had left him and come to England to see her mother, who had been very ill, but who was now much better. When she had left Constantinople she had not known she was coming to Liverpool, but she had known that something was intruding upon her happiness, was worrying at her mind. Only when she found herself once more in England did she understand that

she could not return to Turkey without making an effort to do a good deed. She had very little hope that her effort would be efficacious, but she knew that she had to make it.

It was quite a new rôle for her, the rôle of Good Samaritan. She smiled faintly as she thought that. How would she play it ?

After tea she wrote this note :

"ADELPHI HOTEL, *Tuesday*

"DEAR MR. ROBERTSON,—As you will not know who I am, I must explain myself. My husband, Sir Carey Ingleton, is Ambassador at Constantinople. Out there we have made acquaintance with Mr. Dion Leith, who had the terrible misfortune to kill his little boy nearly a year and a half ago. I want very much to speak to you about him. I will explain why when I see you if you have the time to spare me an interview. I would gladly welcome you here, or I could come to you. Which do you prefer ? I am telling the messenger to wait for an answer. To be frank, I have come to Liverpool on purpose to see you.—Yours sincerely,

"DELIA INGLETON"

The messenger came back without an answer. Father Robertson was out, but the note would be given to him as soon as he came home.

That evening, just after nine o'clock, he arrived at the hotel, and sent up his name to Lady Ingleton.

"Please ask him to come up," she said to the German waiter who had mispronounced his name.

As she waited for her visitor she was conscious of a faint creeping of shyness through her. It made her feel oddly girlish. When had she last felt shy ? She could not remember. It must have been centuries ago.

The German waiter opened the door and a white-haired man walked in. Directly she saw him Lady Ingleton lost her unusual feeling. As she greeted him, and made her little apology for bothering him, and thanked him for coming out at night to see a stranger, she felt glad that she had obeyed her impulse and had been, for once, a victim to altruism. When she looked at his eyes she knew that she would not mind saying to him all she wanted to say about Dion Leith. They were eyes which shone with charity ; and they were something else—they were totally incurious eyes. Perhaps

from perversity Lady Ingleton had always rebelled against giving to curious people the exact food they were in search of.

"He won't be greedy to know," she thought. "And so I shan't mind telling him."

Unlike a woman, she came at once to the point. Although she could be very evasive she could also be very direct.

"You know Mrs. Dion Leith," she said. "My friend Tippie Chetwinde, Mrs. Willie Chetwinde, told me she was living here. She came here soon after the death of her child, I believe."

"Yes, she did, and she has been here ever since."

"Do you know Dion Leith, Mr. Robertson?" she asked, leaning forward in her chair by the fire, and fixing her large eyes, that looked like an Italian's, upon him.

"No, I have never seen him. I hoped to, but the tragedy of the child occurred so soon after his return from South Africa that I never had an opportunity."

"Forgive me for correcting you," she said, gently but very firmly. "But it is not the tragedy of a child. It's the tragedy of a man. I am going to talk very frankly to you. I make no apology for doing so. I am what is called"—she smiled faintly—"a woman of the world, and you, I think, are an unworldly man. Because I am of the world, and you, in spirit"—she looked at him almost deprecatingly—"are not of it, I can say what I have come here to try to say. I couldn't say it to a man of the world, because I could never give a woman away to such a man. Tell me though, first, if you don't mind—do you care for Mrs. Dion Leith?"

"Very much," said Father Robertson, simply and warmly.

"Do you care for her enough to tell her the truth?"

"I never wish to tell her anything else."

Suddenly Lady Ingleton's face flushed, her dark eyes flashed and then filled with tears, and she said in a voice that shook with emotion:

"Dion Leith killed a body by accident, the body of his little boy. She is murdering a soul deliberately, the soul of her husband."

She did not know at all why she was so suddenly and so violently moved. She had not expected this abrupt access of feeling. It had rushed upon her from she knew not where. She was startled by it.

"I don't know why I should care," she commented, as if half ashamed of herself.

Then she added, with a touch of almost shy defiance:

" But I do care, I do care. That's why I've come here."

" You are right to care if it is so," said Father Robertson.

" Such lots of women wouldn't," she continued, in a quite different, almost cynical, voice. " But that man is an exceptional man—not in intellect, but in heart. And I'm a very happy woman. Perhaps you wonder what that has to do with it. Well, sometimes I see things through my happiness, just because of it ; sometimes I see unhappiness through it."

Her voice had changed again, had become much softer. She drew her chair a little nearer to the fire.

" Do you ever receive confessions, Mr. Robertson—as a priest, I mean ? " she asked.

" Yes, very often."

" They are sacred, I know, even in your church."

" Yes," he said, without emphasis.

His lack of emphasis decided her. Till this moment she had been undecided about a certain thing, although she herself perhaps was not fully aware of her hesitation.

" I want to do a thing that I have never yet done," she said. " I want to be treacherous to a friend, to give a friend away. Will you promise to keep my treachery secret for ever ? Will you promise to treat what I am going to tell you about her as if I told it to you in the confessional ? "

" If you tell it to me I will. But why must you tell it to me ? I don't like treachery. It's an ugly thing."

" I can't help that. I really came here just for that—to be treacherous."

She looked into the fire and sighed.

" I've covered a great sin with my garment," she murmured slowly, " and I repent me ! "

Then, with a look of resolve, she turned to her white-haired companion.

" I've got a friend," she said—" a woman friend. Her name is Cynthia Clarke (I'm in the confessional now !) You may have heard of her. She was in a *cause célèbre* some time ago. Her husband tried to divorce her, poor man, and failed."

" No, I never heard her name before," said Father Robertson.

" You don't read *causes célèbres*. You have better things to do. Well, she's my friend. I don't exactly know why. Her husband was Councillor in my husband's Embassy. But I knew her before that. We always got on. She has peculiar fascination—a sort of strange beauty, a very intelligent mind

and the strongest will I have ever known. She has virtues of a kind. She never speaks against other women. If she knew a secret of mine I am sure she would never tell it. She is thoroughbred. I find her a very interesting woman. There is absolutely no one like her. She's a woman one would miss. That's on one side. On the other—she's a cruel woman ; she's a consummate hypocrite ; she's absolutely corrupt. You wonder why she's my friend ? "

" I did not say so."

" Nor look it. But you do. Well, I suppose I haven't many scruples except about myself. And I have been trained in the let-other-people-alone tradition. Besides, Cynthia Clarke never told me anything. No one has told me. Being a not stupid woman, I just know what she is. I'll put it brutally, Mr. Robertson. She is a huntress of men. That is what she lives for. But she deceives people into believing that she is a purely mental woman. All the men whom she doesn't hunt believe in her. Even women believe in her. She has good friends among women. They stick to her. Why ? Because she intends them to. She has a conquering will. And she never tells a secret—especially if it is her own. In her last sin—for it is a sin—I have been a sort of accomplice. She meant me to be one and "—Lady Ingleton slightly shrugged her shoulders—" I yielded to her will. I don't know why. I never know why I do what Cynthia Clarke wishes. There are people like that ; they just get what they want, because they want it with force, I suppose. Most of us are rather weak, I think. Cynthia Clarke hunted Dion Leith in his misery, and I helped her. Being an ambassadress I have social influence on the Bosporus, and I used it for Cynthia. I knew from the very first what she was about, what she meant to do. Directly she mentioned Dion Leith to me and asked me to invite him to the Embassy and be kind to him I understood. But I didn't know Dion Leith then. If I had thoroughly known him I should never have been a willing catspaw in a very ugly game. But once I had begun—I took them both for a yachting trip—I did not know how to get out of it all. On that yachting trip I realized how that man was suffering and what he was. I have never before known a man capable of suffering so intensely as Dion Leith suffers. Does his wife know how he loves her ? Can she know it ? Can she ever have known it ? "

Father Robertson was silent. As she looked at his eyelids—his eyes no longer met hers with their luminous

glowing sincerity—Lady Ingleton realized that he was the Confessor.

"Sometimes I have been on the verge of saying to him, 'Go back to England, go to your wife. Tell her, show her what she has done. Put up a big fight for the life of your soul.' But I have never been able to do it. A grief like that is holy ground, isn't it? One simply can't set foot upon it. Besides, I scarcely ever see Dion Leith now. He's gone down, I think, gone down very far"

"Where is he?"

"In Constantinople. I saw him by chance in Stamboul, near Santa Sophia, just before I left for England. Oh, how he has changed! Cynthia Clarke is destroying him. I know it. Once she told me he had been an athlete with ideals. But now—now!"

Again the tears started into her eyes. Father Robertson looked up and saw them.

"Poor, poor fellow!" she said. "I can't bear to see him destroyed. Some men—well, they seem almost entirely body. But he's so different!"

She got up and stood by the fire.

"I have seen Mrs. Leith," she said. "I once heard her sing in London. She is extraordinarily beautiful. At that time she looked radiant. What did you say?"

"Please go on," Father Robertson said, very quietly.

"And she had a wonderful expression of joyous goodness which marked her out from other women. You have a regard for her, and you are good. But you care for truth, and so I'm going to tell you the truth. Mrs. Leith behaved wickedly in casting her husband out of her life. She may be a good woman, but she has done a wicked action. Can't you make her see it? Or shall I try to?"

"You wish to see her?"

"I am ready to see her."

Father Robertson again looked down. He seemed to be thinking deeply, to be genuinely lost in thought. Lady Ingleton noticed this and did not disturb him. For some minutes he sat without moving. At last he looked up and put a question to Lady Ingleton which surprised her. He said:

"Are you absolutely certain that your friend Mrs. Clarke and Dion Leith have been what people choose to call lovers?"

"Have been and are—absolutely certain. I could not prove it, but I know it. He lives on in Constantinople only for her."

"And you think he has deteriorated?"

"Terribly. I know it. The other day he looked almost degraded; as men look when they let physical things get absolute domination over them. It's an ugly subject, but—you and I know of these things."

In her voice there was a sound of delicate apology. It was her tribute to the serene purity of which she was aware in this man.

Again he seemed lost in thought. She trusted in his power of thought. He was a man—she was certain of it—who would find the one path which led out of the maze. His unself-conscious intentness was beautiful in its unconventional simplicity, and was a tribute to her sincerity which she was subtle enough to understand, and good woman enough to appreciate. He was concentrated not upon her but upon the problem which was troubling her.

"I am glad you have come to Liverpool," he said at length. "Very glad."

He smiled, and she, without exactly knowing why, smiled back at him. And as she did so she felt extraordinarily simple, almost like a child.

"How long are you going to stay?"

"Till I know whether I can do any good," she said, "till I have done it, if that is possible."

"Without mentioning any names, may I, if I think it wise, tell Mrs. Leith of the change in her husband?"

"Oh, but would it be wise to say exactly what the nature of the change is? I've always heard that she is a woman with ideals, an exceptionally pure-natured woman. She might be disgusted, even revolted, perhaps, if——"

"Forgive me!" Father Robertson interrupted, rather abruptly. "What was your intention then? What did you mean to tell Mrs. Leith if you saw her?"

"Of his great wretchedness, of his broken life—I suppose I—I should have trusted to my instinct what to do when I saw her."

"Ah!"

"But I can leave it to you," she said, but still with a faint note of hesitation, of doubt. "You know her."

"Yes, I know her."

He paused. Then, with an almost obstinate firmness, a sort of pressure, he added, "Have I your permission—I may not do it—to tell Mrs. Leith that her husband has been unfaithful to her with some one in Constantinople?"

Lady Ingleton slightly reddened; she looked down and hesitated.

"It may be necessary if your purpose in coming here is to be achieved," said Father Robertson, still with pressure.

"You may do whatever you think best," she said, with a sigh.

He got up to go.

"Would you mind very much staying on here for two or three days, even for a week, if necessary?"

"No, no."

He smiled.

"A whole week of Liverpool!" he said.

"How many years have you been here?"

"A good many. I'm almost losing count."

When he was gone Lady Ingleton sat for a long while before the fire.

The sad influence of the blackness of rainy Liverpool had lifted from her. Her impulse had received a welcome which had warmed her.

"I love that man," she thought. "Carey would love him too."

He had said very little, and how loyal he had been in his silence, how loyal to the woman she had attacked. In words he had not defended her, but somehow he had conveyed to Lady Ingleton a sense of his protective love and immense pity for the woman who had been bereft of her child. How he had conveyed this she could not have said. But as she sat there before the fire she was aware that, since Father Robertson's visit, she felt differently about Dion Leith's wife. Mysteriously she began to feel the sorrow of the woman as well as, and side by side with, the sorrow of the man.

"If it had been my child?" she thought. "If my husband had done it?"

She slept badly that night. Nevertheless the strong and gentle influence of Father Robertson had not left her. It companioned her, prevented her from feeling homeless, quite desolate in this unfamiliar city which held no friends of hers.

The following day passed, and no message came to her from Father Robertson. She was expectant, then a little anxious, then depressed, and finally bored. She looked on at herself as the Good Samaritan and she began to smile at herself. The spectacle of herself waiting about in a Liverpool hotel was really rather absurd. Annette was frankly amazed and could not make out what they were doing in this rainy

place where nobody bothered about them. Even Turkish Jane drifted into ennui. Her ecstasy had already died out.

It was all very tiresome.

In the afternoon of the second day a note came from Father Robertson. It was very brief. He begged Lady Ingleton not to leave Liverpool. He did not explain why he wished her to stay; he did not mention Mrs. Dion Leith, or hint at any activity on his part connected in any way with her. Yet Lady Ingleton immediately felt reconciled to her situation. She did not know what was happening, but she felt positive that the white-haired man, who had paid her the compliment of thinking about her unselfish anxiety instead of about her personality as a woman, was fighting her battle.

He was in fact striving for two souls. And Rosamund's, in religion, needed rescuing no less than Dion's in the perversity and vice which emanated like a miasma from the woman whom Sir Carey had thought of strangely for a moment as the Goddess of Death.

## CHAPTER X

WHEN he left Lady Ingleton, Father Robertson went home in the rainy blackness to the plain little house in an ugly street where he had dwelt for many years, shut himself in, knelt down before a wooden crucifix in his bedroom and prayed. Afterwards for a long time he meditated upon his knees.

In his meditation he considered the stubborn quality of the human soul which often seems forced by some inherent power to resist emancipation.

Rosamund Leith had a stubborn soul. He knew it. She was stubborn in love and stubborn in resisting love. She had power to dominate, but she was often dominated by powers within herself. The very strength of her character often seemed to hold her in bondage.

Although he loved her Father Robertson secretly condemned her as Lady Ingleton condemned her. For he had no moral blindness. His sense of justice was one of the keenest weapons in his armoury. The pity that was in him.

the mercy which drew people to him, never blunted that weapon. He never loved men and women as they were not, but always as they were. And he would give a right verdict even if it were against the one he loved best.

Lady Ingleton was right. Rosamund's grief had made her unjust, cruel, even destructive. She was a good woman who had done an evil thing. She honestly believed that she had given herself to God, but, in doing so—if she had done it—she had been false to a promise made before God. And she was seeking God apart from the man to whom God had joined her.

Was not that a quest in the dark ?

But there was the great difficulty of the human feeling.

Father Robertson had had a wide experience of men and women, and he knew the uselessness of trying to force feeling. Rosamund's terrible grief had revealed to him the extent of her love for Robin. It was a love of the very entrails of a woman. It was compounded of the animal and of the spiritual. It had its roots in the roots of her. As much as a man can understand such a love Father Robertson understood it. But what had been Rosamund's feeling towards her husband in the days before Robin ? Such a woman must surely have loved the man she married. And yet, if she had loved him, how could she have punished him so fearfully for a tragic accident ? But when he came to that question Father Robertson was always assailed by the sense of his limitations as a man. With all his sympathy, with all his imagination, he was doubtless wholly unable to conceive what the typical mother-woman feels about her only child. He did not possess the key which alone, perhaps, could open the door of Rosamund's inner sanctuary. And that was why he was perhaps impotent to save Rosamund from the evil thing which persistently marred her goodness, and which, he believed, added to her misery the secret torture of a sick conscience.

Since the death of Robin and Rosamund's arrival in Liverpool, Father Robertson had made acquaintance with her sister and with the mother of Dion. And both these women had condemned Rosamund for what she had done, and had begged him to try to bring about a change in her heart. Both of them, too, had dwelt upon the exceptional quality of Dion's love for his wife. Mrs. Leith had been unable to conceal the bitterness of her feeling against Rosamund. The mother in her was outraged, as the mother

in Rosamund, in a different way, was outraged. Beatrice Daventry had shown no bitterness. She loved and understood her sister too well to rage against her for anything that she did or left undone. But this very love of her sister, so clearly shown, had made her condemnation of Rosamund's action the more impressive. And her pity for Dion was supreme. Through Beatrice Father Robertson had gained an insight into Dion's love, and into another love, too; but of that he scarcely allowed himself even to think. There are purities so intense that, like fire, they burn those who would handle them, however tenderly. About Beatrice Father Robertson felt that he knew something he dared not know. Indeed, he was hardly sincere about that matter with himself. Perhaps this was his only insincerity.

With his friend, Canon Wilton, too, he had spoken of Rosamund, and had found himself in the presence of a sort of noble anger. Now, in his little room, as he knelt in meditation, he remembered a saying of the Canon's, spoken in the panelled library at Welsley: "Leith has a great heart. When will his wife understand its greatness?"

Father Robertson pressed his thin hands upon his closed eyes. He longed for guidance and he felt almost distressed. Rosamund had submitted herself to him, had given herself into his hands, but tacitly she had kept something back. She had never permitted him to direct her in regard to her relation with her husband. It was in regard to her relation with God that she had submitted herself to him.

How grotesque that was!

Father Robertson's face burned.

Before Rosamund had come to him she had closed the book of her married life with a frantic hand. And Father Robertson had left the book closed. He saw his delicacy now as cowardice. In his religious relation with Rosamund he had been too much of a gentleman! When Mrs. Leith, Beatrice, Canon Wilton had appealed to him, he had said that he would do what he could some day, but that he felt time must be given to Rosamund, a long time, to recover from the tremendous shock she had undergone. He had waited. Something imperative had kept him back from ever going fully with Rosamund into the question of her separation from her husband. He had certainly spoken of it, but he had never discussed it, had never got to the bottom of it, although he had felt that some day he must be quite frank with her about it.

Some day ! No doubt he had been waiting for a propitious moment, that moment which never comes. Or had his instinct told him that anything he could say upon that subject to Rosamund would be utterly impotent, that there was a threshold his influence could not cross ? Perhaps really his instinct had told him to wait, and he was not a moral coward. For to strive against a woman's deep feeling is surely to beat against the wind. When men do certain things all women look upon them with an inevitable disdain, as children being foolish in the dark.

Had he secretly feared to seem foolish in Rosamund's eyes ?

He wondered, genuinely wondered.

On the following morning he wrote to Rosamund and asked her to come to the vicarage at any hour when she was free. He had something important to say to her. She answered, fixing three-thirty. Exactly at that time she arrived in Manxby Street and was shown into Father Robertson's study.

Rosamund was changed, greatly changed, but in a subtle rather than in a fiercely definite way. She had not aged as many women age when overtaken by sorrow. Her pale yellow hair was still bright. There was no grey in it and it grew vigorously upon her classical head as if intensely alive. She still looked physically strong. She was still a young and beautiful woman. But all the radiance had gone out from her. She had been full of it ; now she was empty of it.

In the walled garden at Welsley, as she paced the narrow walks and listened to the distant murmur of the organ, and the faint sound of the Dresden Amen, in her joy she had looked sometimes almost like a nun. She had looked as if she had the " vocation " for religion. Now, in her " sister's " dress, she had not that inner look of calm, of the spirit lying still in Almighty arms, which so often marks out those who have definitely abandoned the ordinary life of the world for the dedicated life. Rosamund had taken no perpetual vows ; she was free at any moment to withdraw from the Sisterhood in which she was living with many devoted women who laboured among the poor, and who prayed, as some people work, with an ardour which physically tired them. But nevertheless she had definitely retired from all that means life to the average woman of her type and class, with no intention of ever going back to it. She had taken a step towards the mystery which many people think of casually on appointed days, and which many people ignore, or try to

ignore. Yet now she did not look as if she had the vocation. When she had lived in the world she had seemed, in spite of all her *joie de vivre*, of all her animation and vitality, somehow apart from it. Now she seemed, somehow, apart from the world of religion, from the calm and laborious world in which she had chosen to dwell. She looked indeed almost strangely pure, but there was in her face an expression of acute restlessness, perpetually seen among those who are grasping at passing pleasures, scarcely ever seen among those who have deliberately resigned them.

This was surely a woman who had sought and who had not found, who was uneasy in self-sacrifice, who had striven, who was striving still, to draw near to the gates of heaven, but who had not come upon the path which led up the mountain-side to them. Sorrow was stamped on the face, and something else, too—the seal of that corrosive disease of the soul, dissatisfaction with self.

This was not Rosamund; this was a woman with Rosamund's figure, face, hair, eyes, voice, gestures, movements—one who would be Rosamund but for some terrible flaw.

She was alone in the little study for a few minutes before Father Robertson came. She did not sit down, but moved about, looking now at this thing, now at that. In her white forehead there were two vertical lines which were never smoothed out. An irreligious person, looking at her just then, might have felt moved to say, with a horrible irony, "And can God do no more than that for the woman who dedicates her life to His service?"

The truth of the whole matter lay in this: that whereas once God had seemed to stand between Rosamund and Dion, now Dion seemed to stand between Rosamund and God.

But even Father Robertson did not know this.

Presently the door opened and the Father came in.

Instantly Rosamund noticed that he looked slightly ill at ease, almost, indeed, embarrassed. He shook hands with her in his gentle way and made a few ordinary remarks about little matters in which they were mutually interested. Then he asked her to sit down, sat down near her and was silent.

"What is it?" she said, at last.

He looked at her, and there was something almost piercing in his eyes which she had never noticed in them before.

"Last night," he said, "when I came home I found here a note from a stranger, asking me to visit her at the

Adelphi Hotel where she was staying. She wrote that she had come to Liverpool on purpose to see me. I went to the hotel and had an interview with her. This interview concerned you."

"Concerned me?" said Rosamund.

Her voice did not sound as if she were actively surprised. There was a lack of tone in it. It sounded, indeed, almost dry.

"Yes. Did you ever hear of Lady Ingleton?"

After an instant of consideration Rosamund said:

"Yes. I believe I met her somewhere once. Isn't she married to an ambassador?"

"To our Ambassador at Constantinople."

"I think I sang once at some house where she was, in the days when I used to sing."

"She has heard you sing."

"That was it then. But what can she want with me?"

"Your husband is in Constantinople. She knows him there."

Rosamund flushed to the roots of her yellow hair. When he saw that painful wave of red go over her face Father Robertson looked away. All the delicacy in him felt the agony of her outraged reserve. Her body had stiffened.

"I must speak about this," he said. "Forgive me if you can. But even if you cannot, I must speak."

She looked down. Her face was still burning.

"You have let me know a great deal about yourself," he went on. "That fact doesn't give me any right to be curious. On the contrary! But I think, perhaps, your confidence has given me a right to try to help you spiritually even at the cost of giving you great mental pain. For a long time I have felt that perhaps in my relation to you I have been morally a coward."

Rosamund looked up.

"You could never be a coward," she said.

"You don't know that. Nobody knows that, perhaps, except myself. However that may be, I must not play the coward now. Lady Ingleton met your husband in Turkey. She brings very painful news of him."

Rosamund clasped her hands together and let them lie on her knees. She was looking steadily at Father Robertson.

"His—his misery has made such an impression upon her that she felt obliged to come here. She sent for me. But her real object in coming was to see you, if possible. Will you see her?"

"No, no; I can't do that. I don't know her."

"I think I ought to tell you what she said. She asked me if you had ever understood how much your husband loves you. Her exact words were, 'Does his wife know how he loves her? Can she know it? Can she ever have known it?'"

All the red had died away from Rosamund's face. She had become very pale. Her eyes were steady. She sat without moving, and seemed to be listening with fixed, even with strained, attention.

"And then she went on to tell me something which might seem to a great many people to be quite contradictory of what she had just said—and she said it with the most profound conviction. She told me that your husband has fallen very low."

"Fallen——?" Rosamund said, in a dim voice.

"Just before she left Constantinople she saw him in Stamboul by chance. She said he had the dreadful appearance that men have when they are entirely dominated by physical things."

"Dion!" she said.

And there was sheer amazement in her voice now.

After an instant she added:

"I don't believe it. It wasn't Dion."

"I must tell you something more," said Father Robertson painfully. "Lady Ingleton knows that your husband has been unfaithful to you; she knows the woman with whom he has been unfaithful. That unfaithfulness continues. So she affirms. And in spite of that, she asks me whether you can know how much your husband loves you."

While he had been speaking he had been looking down. Now he heard a movement, a rustling. He looked up quickly. Rosamund was going towards the door.

"Please—don't—don't!" she whispered. turning her face away.

And she went out.

Father Robertson did not follow her.

Early in the following morning he received this note:

"ST. MARY'S SISTERHOOD, LIVERPOOL,
*Thursday*

"DEAR FATHER ROBERTSON,—I don't think I can see Lady Ingleton. I am almost sure I can't. Perhaps she has gone already. If not, how long does she intend to stay here?

"R. L."

The Father communicated with Lady Ingleton, and that evening let Rosamund know that Lady Ingleton would be in Liverpool for a few more days.

When Rosamund read his letter she wished, or believed that she wished, that Lady Ingleton had gone. Then this matter which tormented her would be settled, finished with. There would be nothing to be done, and she could take up her monotonous life again and forget this strange intrusion from the outside world, forget this voice from the near East which had told such ugly tidings. Till now she had not even known where Dion was. She knew he had given up his business in London and had left England; but that was all. She had refused to have news of him. She had made it plainly understood long ago, when the wound was fresh in her soul, that Dion's name was never to be mentioned in letters to her. She had tried by every means to blot his memory out of her mind as she had blotted his presence out of her life. In this effort she had totally failed. Dion had never left her since he had killed Robin. In the flesh he had pursued her in the walled garden at Welsley on that black night of November when for her the whole world had changed. In another intangible, mysterious guise he had attended her ever since. He had been about her path and about her bed. Even when she knelt at the altar in the Supreme Service he had been there. She had felt his presence as she touched the wafer, as she lifted the cup. Through all these months she had learnt to know that there are those whom, once we have taken them in, we cannot cast out of our lives.

Since the death of Robin, in absence Dion had assumed a place in her life which he had never occupied in the days of their happiness. Sometimes she had bitterly resented this; sometimes she had tried to ignore it; sometimes, like a cross, she had taken it up and tried to bear it with patience or with bravery. She had even prayed against it.

Never were prayers more vain than those which she put up against this strange and terrible possession of herself by the man she had tried to cast out of her life. Sometimes even it seemed to her that when she prayed thus Dion's power to affect her increased. It was as if mysteriously he drew nearer to her, as if he enveloped her with an influence from which she could not extricate herself. There were hours in the night when she felt afraid of him. She knew that wherever he was, however far off, his mind was concentrated upon her. She grew to realize, as she had never realized before,

what mental power is. She had separated her body from Dion's, but his mind would not leave her alone. Often she was conscious of hostility. When she strove to give herself absolutely and entirely to the life of religion and of charity she was aware of a force holding her back. This force—so it seemed to her—would not permit her to enter into the calm and the peace of the dedicated life. She was like some one looking in at a doorway, desirous of entering a room. She saw the room clearly ; she saw others enjoying its warmth and its shelter and its serene and guarded tranquillity ; but she was unable to cross the threshold.

That warm and sheltered room was not for her. And it was Dion's force which held her back from entering it and from dwelling in it.

She could not give herself wholly to God because of Dion.

Of her struggle, of her frustration, of her mental torment in this connexion she had never spoken to Father Robertson. Even in confession she had been silent. He knew of her mother-agony ; he did not know of the stranger, more subtle agony beneath it. He did not know that whereas the one agony with the lapse of time was not passing away—it would never do that—but was becoming more tender, more full of tears and of sweet recollections, the other agony grew harsher, more menacing.

Rosamund had gradually come to feel that Robin had been taken out of her arms for some great, though hidden, reason. And because of this feeling she was learning to endure his loss with a sort of resignation. She often thought that perhaps she had been allowed to have this consolation because she had made an immense effort. When Robin died she had driven Dion, who had killed her child, out of her life, but she had succeeded in saying to God, " Thy will be done ! " She had said it at first as a mere formula, had repeated it obstinately again and again, without meaning it at all, but trying to mean it, meaning to mean it. She had made a prodigious, a truly heroic effort to conquer her powerfully rebellious nature, and, in this effort, she had been helped by Father Robertson. He knew of the anger which had overwhelmed her when her mother had died, of how she had wished to hurt God. He knew that, with bloody sweat, she had destroyed that enemy within her. She had wished to submit to the will of God when Robin had been snatched away from her, and at last she had actually submitted. It was a great triumph of the spirit. But perhaps it had left her exhausted.

At any rate she had never been able to forgive God's instrument, her husband. And so she had never been able to know the peace of God which many of these women by whom she was surrounded knew. In her misery she contemplated their calm. To labour and to pray—that seemed enough to many of them, to most of them. She had known calm in the garden at Welsley ; in the Sisterhood she knew it not.

The man who was always with her assassinated calm. She felt strangely from a distance the turmoil of his spirit. She knew of his misery occultly. She did not deduce it from her former knowledge of what he was. And his suffering made her suffer in a terrible way. He was her victim and she was his.

*Those whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder.*

In the Sisterhood Rosamund had learnt, always against her will and despite the utmost effort of her obstinacy, the uselessness of that command ; she had learnt that those whom God hath really joined together cannot be put asunder by man—or by woman. Dion had killed her child, but she had not been able to kill what she was to Dion and what Dion was to her. Through the mingling of their two beings there had been born a mystery which was, perhaps, eternal, like the sound of the murmur in the pine trees above the Valley of Olympia.

She could not trample it into nothingness.

At first, after the tragedy of which Robin had been the victim, Rosamund had felt a horror of Dion which was partly animal. She had fled from him because she had been physically afraid of him. He had been changed for her from the man who loved her, and whom she loved in her different way, into the slayer of her child. She knew, of course, quite well that Dion was not a murderer, but nevertheless she thought of him as one thinks of a murderer. The blood of her child was upon his hands. She trembled at the thought of being near him. Nevertheless, because she was not mad, in time reason asserted itself within her. Dion disappeared out of her life. He did not put up the big fight for the big thing of which Lady Ingleton had once spoken to her husband. His type of love was far too sensitive to struggle and fight on its own behalf. When he had heard the key of his house door turned against him, when, later, Mr. Darlington with infinite precautions had very delicately explained to him why it had been done, Rosamund had attained her freedom. He had waited on for a time in England, but he had somehow

never been able really to hope for any change in his wife. His effort to make her see the tragedy in its true light had exhausted itself in the garden at Welsley. Her frantic evasion of him had brought it to an end. He could not renew it. Even if he had been ready to renew it those about Rosamund would have dissuaded him from doing so. Every one who was near her saw plainly that " for the present "—as they put it—Dion must keep out of her life.

And gradually Rosamund had lost that half-animal fear of him, gradually she had come to realize something of the tragedy of his situation. A change had come about in her almost in despite of herself. And yet she had never been able to forgive him for what he had done. Her reason knew that she had nothing to forgive; her religious sense, her conception of God, obliged her to believe that Dion had been God's instrument when he had killed his child; but something within her refused him pardon. Perhaps she felt that pardon could only mean one thing—reconciliation. And now had come Lady Ingleton's revelation. Instinctively as Rosamund left Father Robertson's little room she had tried to hide her face. She had received a blow, and the pain of it frightened her. She was startled by her own suffering. What did it mean? What did it portend? She had no right to feel as she did. Long ago she had abandoned the right to such a feeling.

The information Lady Ingleton had brought outraged Rosamund. Anger and a sort of corrosive shame struggled for the mastery within her.

She felt humiliated to the dust. She felt dirty, soiled.

Dion had been unfaithful to her.

With whom?

The white face of Mrs. Clarke came before Rosamund in the murky street, two wide-open distressed and intent eyes stared into hers.

The woman was Mrs. Clarke.

Mrs. Clarke—and Dion. Mrs. Clarke had succeeded in doing what long ago she had designed to do. She had succeeded in taking possession of Dion.

" Because I threw him away! Because I threw him away!"

Rosamund found herself repeating those words again and again.

" I threw him away, I threw him away. Otherwise——"

She reached the Sisterhood and went to her little room.

How she got through the remaining duties of that day she never remembered afterwards. The calmness of routine flagellated her nerves. She felt undressed and feared the eyes of the sisters. At the evening service in the little chapel attached to the Sisterhood she was unable either to meditate, to praise, or to pray. During the long pause for silent prayer she felt like one on a galloping horse. In the intense silence her ears seemed to hear the beating of hoofs on an iron road. And the furious horse was bearing her away into some region of darkness and terror.

There was a rustling movement. The sisters slowly rose from their knees. Again Rosamund was conscious of feeling soiled, dirty, in the midst of them. As they filed out, she with them, a burning hatred came to her. She hated the woman who was the cause of her feeling dirty. She wanted to use her hands, to tear something away from her body—the dirt, the foulness. For she felt it actually on her body. Her physical purity was desecrated by—she wouldn't think of it.

When she was alone in her little sleeping-room, the door shut, one candle burning, her eyes went to the wooden crucifix beneath which every night before getting into her narrow bed she knelt in prayer, and she began to cry. She sat down on the bed and cried and cried. All her flesh seemed melting into tears.

" My poor life ! My poor life ! "

That was the interior cry of her being, again and again repeated—" My poor life—stricken, soiled, crushed down in the ooze of a nameless filth."

Childless, and now betrayed ! How terrible had been her happiness on the edge of the pit ! The days in Greece—Robin—Dion's return from the war ! And she had wished to live rightly ; she had loved the noble things ; she had had ideals and she had tried to follow them. Purity before all she had——

She sickened ; her crying became violent. Afraid lest some of the sisters should hear her, she pressed her hands over her face and sank down on the bed.

Presently she saw Mrs. Clarke before her, the woman whom she had thought to keep out of her life—the fringe of her life—and who now had found the way into the sacred places.

She cried for a long while, lying there on the bed, with her face pressed against her hands, and her hands pressed against

the pillow; but at last she ceased from crying. She had poured out all the tears of her body.

She sat up. It was long past midnight. The house was silent. Slowly she began to undress, hating her body all the time. She bathed her face and hands in cold water, and, when she felt the water, shivered at the thought of the stain. When she was ready for bed she looked again at the crucifix. She ought to pray, she must pray. She went to the crucifix and stood in front of it, but her knees refused to bend. Her pride of woman had received a terrific blow that day, and just because of that she felt that she could not humble herself.

"I cannot pray—I won't pray," she whispered.

And she turned away, put out the light and got into bed. That Dion should have done that, should have been able to do that!

And she remembered what it was she had first loved in Dion, the thing which had made him different from other men; she remembered the days and the nights in Greece. She saw two lovers in a morning land descending the path from the hill of Drouva, going down into the green recesses of quiet Elis. She saw Hermes and the child.

All that night she lay awake. In the morning she sent the note to Father Robertson.

She could not see Lady Ingleton and yet she dreaded her departure. She wanted to know more, much more. A gnawing hunger of curiosity assailed her. This woman had been with Dion—since. This woman knew of his infidelity; yet she affirmed his love for his wife. But the one knowledge surely gave the lie to the other.

Why did she care? Why did she care so much? Rosamund asked herself the question almost with terror.

She found no answer.

But she could not pray. Whenever she tried to pray Mrs. Clarke came before her, and a man—could it be Dion?—stamped with the hideous imprint of physical lust.

. . . . . .

Father Robertson was startled by the change in Rosamund's appearance when she visited him two days after she had sent him the note. She looked physically ill. Her colour had gone. Her eyes were feverish and sunken, and the skin beneath them was stained with that darkness which betokens nights without sleep. Her lips and hands twitched with a nervousness that was painful. But that which distressed

him more than any other thing was the expression in her face — the look of shame and of self-consciousness which altered her almost horribly. Even in her most frantic moments of grief for Robin there had always been something of directness, of fearlessness, in her beauty. Now something furtive literally disfigured her, and she seemed trying to cover it with a dogged obstinacy which suggested a will stretched to the uttermost, vibrating like a string in danger of snapping.

"Has Lady Ingleton gone?" she asked, directly she was inside the room.

"No, not yet. You remember I wrote to you that she would stay on for a few days."

"But she might have gone unexpectedly."

"She is still here."

"I believe I shall have to see her," Rosamund said, with a sort of hard abruptness and determination.

"Go to see her," said Father Robertson firmly. "Perhaps she was sent here."

"Sent here?" said Rosamund, with a sharpness of sudden suspicion.

"Oh, my child,"—he put his hand on her arm, and made her sit down,—"not by a human being."

Rosamund looked down and was silent.

"Before you go, if you are going," Father Robertson continued, sitting down by the deal table on which he wrote his letters, "I must do what I ought to have done long ago I must speak to you about your husband."

Rosamund did not look up, but he saw her frown, and he saw a movement of her lips; they trembled and then set together in a hard line.

"I know what he was, not from you but from others; from his mother, your sister, and from Canon Wilton. I'm going to tell you something Wilton said to me about you and him after you had separated from him."

Father Robertson stopped, and fidgeted for a moment with the papers lying in disorder on his table. He hated the task he had set himself to do. All the tenderness in him revolted against it. He knew what this woman whom he cared for very much had suffered; he divined what she was suffering now. And he was going to add to her accumulated misery by striking a tremendous blow at that most sacred thing, her pride of woman. Would she be his enemy after he had spoken? It was possible. Yet he must speak.

"He said to me—'Leith has a great heart. When will his wife understand its greatness?'"

There was a long silence. Then, without changing her position or lifting her head, Rosamund said in a hard, level voice:

"Canon Wilton was right about my husband."

"He loved you. That's a great deal. But he loved you in a very beautiful way. And that's much more."

"Who told you—about the way he loved me?"

"Your sister, Beatrice."

"Beattie! Yes, she knew—she understood."

She bent her head a little lower, then added:

"Beattie is worth more than I am."

"You are worth a great deal, but—but I want to see you rise to the heights of your nature. I want to see you accomplish the greatest task of all."

"Yes?"

"Conquer the last citadel of your egoism. *Ego dormio et cor meum vigilat*—Send the insistent I to sleep. I said it to you long ago before I knew you. I say it to you now when I do know you, when I know the deep waters you have passed through, and the darkness that has beset you. Fetter your egoism. Release your heart and your spirit in one great action. Don't let him go down for ever because of you. I believe your misery has been as nothing in comparison with his. If he has fallen—such a man—why is it?"

"I know why," she almost whispered.

"You can never mount up while you are driving a soul downwards. Do you remember those words in the Bible: 'Where thou goest I will go'?"

"Yes."

"Perhaps they might be changed in respect of you and the man who loved you so much and in such a beautiful way. You were linked; can the link ever be broken? You have tried to break it, but have you succeeded? And if not, wouldn't it be true, drastically true, if you said—Where thou goest I *must* go? If he goes down because of you I think you'll go down with him."

Rosamund sat absolutely still. When Father Robertson paused again there was not a sound in the little room.

"And one thing more," he said, not looking towards her. "There's the child, your child and his. Is it well with the child?"

Rosamund moved and looked up. Then she got up from her chair.

"But—but—Robin's——"

She stopped. Her eyes were fixed on Father Robertson. He looked up and met her eyes, and she saw plainly the mystic in him.

"What do we know?" he said. "What do we know of the effects of our actions? Can we be certain that they are limited to this earth? Is it well with the child? I say we don't know. We dare not affirm that we know. He loved his father, didn't he?"

Rosamund looked stricken. He let her go. He could not say any more to her.

That evening Lady Ingleton called in Manxby Street and asked for Father Robertson. He happened to be in and received her at once.

"I've had a note from Mrs. Leith," she said.

"I am not surprised," said Father Robertson. "Indeed I expected it."

"She wishes to see me to-morrow. She writes that she will come to the hotel. How have you persuaded her to come?"

"I don't think I have persuaded her though I wish her to see you. But I have told her of her husband's infidelity."

"You have told her——!"

Lady Ingleton stopped short. She looked unusually discomposed, even nervous and agitated.

"I said you might," she murmured.

"It was essential."

"If Cynthia knew!" said Lady Ingleton.

"I mentioned no name."

"She must have guessed. It's odd, when I told you I didn't feel treacherous—not really! but now I feel a brute. I've never done anything like this before. It's against all my code. I've come here, done all this, and now I dread meeting Mrs. Leith. I wish you could be there when she comes."

She sent him a soft glance out of her Italian eyes.

"You make me feel so safe," she added.

"You and she must be alone. Remember this! Mrs. Leith must go out to Constantinople."

"Leave the Sisterhood! Will she ever do that?"

"You came here with the hope of persuading her, didn't you?"

"A hope was it? A forlorn hope, perhaps."

"Bring it to fruition."

"But Cynthia! If she ever knows!"

Suddenly Father Robertson looked stern.

"If what you told me is true——"

"It is true."

"Then she is doing the devil's work. Put away your fears. They aren't worthy of you."

As she took his hand in the saying of good-bye she said:

"Your code is so different from ours. We think the only possible thing to do—where a friend is concerned—is to shut the eyes and the lips, and to pretend, and to keep on always pretending. We call that being honourable."

"Poor things!" said Father Robertson.

But he pressed her hand as he said it, and there was an almost tender smile on his lips.

"But your love of truth isn't quite dead yet," he added, on the threshold of the door, as he let her out into the rain. "You haven't been able to kill it. It's an indomitable thing, thank God."

"I wish I—why do you live always in Liverpool?" she murmured.

She put up her little silk umbrella and was gone.

There was a fire in her sitting-room on the following morning. The day was windy and cold, for March was going out resentfully. Before the fire lay Turkish Jane on a cushion, blinking placidly at the flames. Already she had become reconciled to her new life in this unknown city. Her ecstasy of the journey had not returned, but the surprise which had succeeded to it was now merged in a stagnant calm, and she felt no objection to passing the remainder of her life in the Adelphi Hotel. She supposed that she was comfortably settled for the day when she heard her mistress call for Annette and give a most objectionable order.

"Please take Jane away, Annette," said Lady Ingleton.

"Miladi!"

"I don't want her here this morning. I'm expecting a visitor, and Jane might bark. I don't wish to have a noise in the room."

Annette, who looked decidedly sulky, approached the cushion, bent down, and rather abruptly snatched the amazed doyenne of the Pekinese from her voluptuous reveries.

"We shall probably leave here to-morrow," Lady Ingleton added.

Annette's expression changed.

"We are going back to London, Miladi?"

"I think so. I'll tell you this afternoon."

She glanced at her watch.

"I don't wish to be disturbed for an hour. Don't leave Jane in my bedroom. Take her away to yours."

"Very well, Miladi."

Annette went out looking inquisitive, with Turkish Jane on her arm.

When she was gone Lady Ingleton took up "The Liverpool Mercury" and tried to read the news of the day. The March wind roared outside and made the windows rattle. She listened to it and forgot the chronicle of the passing hour. She was a woman who cared to know the big things that were happening in the big world. She had always lived among men who were helping to make history, and she was intelligent enough to understand their efforts and to join in their discussions. Her husband had often consulted her when he was in a tight place, and sometimes he had told her she had the brain of a man. But she had the nerves and the heart of a woman, and at this moment public affairs and the news of the day did not interest her at all. She was concentrated on woman's business. Into her hands she had taken a tangled love skein. And she was almost frightened at what she had ventured to do. Could she hope to be of any use, of any help, in getting it into order? Was there any chance for the man she had last seen in Stamboul near Santa Sophia? She almost dreaded Rosamund Leith's arrival. She felt nervous, strung up. The roar of the wind added to her uneasiness. It suggested turmoil, driven things, the angry passions of nature. Beyond the Mersey the sea was raging. She had a stupid feeling that nature and man were always in a ferment, that it was utterly useless to wish for peace, or to try to bring about peace, that destinies could only be worked out to their appointed ends in darkness and in fury. She even forgot her own years of happiness for a little while and saw herself as a woman always anxious, doubtful, and envisaging untoward things. When a knock came on the door she started and got up quickly from her chair. Her heart was beating fast. How ridiculous!

"Come in!" she said.

A waiter opened the door and showed in Rosamund.

## CHAPTER XI

LADY INGLETON looked swiftly at the woman coming in at the doorway clad in the severe, voluminous, black gown and cloak, and black and white headgear, which marked out the members of the Sisterhood of St. Mary's. Her first thought was "What a cold face!" It was succeeded immediately by the thought, "But beautiful even in its coldness." She met Rosamund near the door, took her hand, and said:

"I am glad you were able to come. I wanted very much to meet you. I came here really in the faint hope of seeing you. Let me take your umbrella. What a day it is! Did you walk?"

"I came most of the way by tram. Thank you," said Rosamund, in a contralto voice which sounded inflexible.

Lady Ingleton went to "stand" the umbrella in a corner. In doing this she turned away from her visitor for a moment. She felt more embarrassed, more "at a loss" than she had ever felt before; she even felt guilty, though she had done no wrong and was anxious only to do right. Her sense of guilt, she believed, was caused by the fact that in her heart she condemned her visitor, and by the additional, more unpleasant fact that she knew Rosamund was aware of her condemnation.

"It's hateful—so much knowledge between two women who are strangers to each other!" she thought, as she turned round.

"Do sit down by the fire," she said to Rosamund, who was standing near the writing-table immediately under a large engraving of "Wedded."

She wished ardently that Rosamund wore the ordinary clothes of a well-dressed woman of the world. The religious panoply of the "sister's" attire, with its suggestion of a community apart, got on her nerves, and seemed to make things more difficult.

Rosamund went to a chair and sat down. She still looked very cold, but she succeeded in looking serene, and her eyes, unworldly and pure, did not fall before Lady Ingleton's.

Lady Ingleton sat down near her and immediately realized that she had placed herself exactly opposite to "Wedded." She turned her eyes away from the large nude arms of the

bending man and met Rosamund's gaze fixed steadily upon her. That gaze told her not to delay, but to go straight to the tragic business which had brought her to Liverpool.

"You know of course that my husband is Ambassador at Constantinople," she began.

"Yes," said Rosamund.

"You and I met—at least we were in the same room once—at Tippie Chetwinde's," said Lady Ingleton, almost pleading with her visitor. "I heard you sing."

"Yes, I remember. I told Father Robertson so."

"I dare say you think it very strange my coming here in this way."

In spite of the strong effort of her will Lady Ingleton was feeling with every moment more painfully embarrassed. All her code was absolutely against mixing in the private concerns of others uninvited. She had a sort of delicate hatred of curiosity. She longed to prove to the woman by the fire that she was wholly incurious now, wholly free from the taint of sordid vulgarity that clings to the social busybody.

"I've done it solely because I'm very sorry for some one," she continued; "because I'm very sorry for your husband."

She looked away from Rosamund, and again her eyes rested on the engraving of "Wedded." The large bare arms of the man, his bending, amorous head, almost hypnotized her. She disliked the picture of which this was a reproduction. Far too many people had liked it; their affection seemed to her to have been destructive, to have destroyed any value it had formerly had. Yet now, as she looked almost in despite of herself, suddenly she saw through the engraving, through the symbol, to something beyond; to the prompting conception in the painter's mind which had led to the picture, to the great mystery of the pathetic attempt of human beings who love, or who think they love, to unite themselves to each other, to mingle body with body and soul with soul. She saw a woman in the dress of a "sister," the woman who was with her; she saw a man in an Eastern city; and abruptly courage came to her on the wings of a genuine emotion.

"I don't know how to tell you what I feel about him, Mrs. Leith," she said. "But I want to try to. Will you let me?"

"Yes. Please tell me," said Rosamund, in a level, expressionless voice.

"Remember this; I never saw him till I saw him in Turkey, nor did my husband. We were not able to draw

any comparison between the unhappy man and the happy man. We were unprejudiced."

"I quite understand that; thank you."

"It was in the summer. We were living at Therapia on the Bosporus. He came to stay in a hotel not far off. My husband met him in a valley which the Turks call Kesstane Dereh. He—your husband—was sitting there alone by â stream. They talked. My husband asked him to call at our summer villa. He came the next day. Of course I—I knew something of his story"—she hurried on—"and I was prepared to meet a man who was unhappy. (Forgive me for saying all this.)"

"But, please, I have come to hear," said Rosamund, coldly and steadily.

"Your husband—I was alone with him during his first visit—made an extraordinary impression upon me. I scarcely know how to describe it." She paused for a moment. "There was something intensely bitter in his personality. Bitterness is an active principle. And yet somehow he conveyed to me an impression of emptiness too. I remember he said to me, 'I don't quite know what I am going to do. I'm a free agent. I have no ties.' I shall never forget his look when he said those words. I never knew anything about loneliness—anything really—till that moment. And after that moment I knew everything. I asked him to come on the yacht to Brûsa, or rather to Mudania; from there one goes to Brûsa. He came. You may think, perhaps, that he was eager for society, for pleasure, distraction. It wasn't that He was making a tremendous, a terrible effort to lay hold on life again, to interest himself in things. He was pushed to it."

"Pushed to it!" said Rosamund, still in the hard level voice. "Who pushed him?"

"I can only tell you it was as I say," said Lady Ingleton, quickly and with embarrassment. "We were very few on the yacht. Of course I saw a great deal of your husband. He was absolutely reserved with me. He always has been. You mustn't think he has ever given me the least bit of his confidence. He never has. I am quite sure he never would. We are only acquaintances. But I want to be a friend to him now. He hasn't a friend, not one, out there. My husband, I think, feels rather as I do about him, in so far as a man can feel in our sort of way. He would gladly be more intimate with your husband. But your husband doesn't make friends. He's beyond anything of that kind. He tried, on the yacht

and at Brûsa. He did his utmost. But he was held back by his misery. I must tell you (it's very uninteresting)"—her voice softened here, and her face slightly changed, became gentler, more intensely feminine—" that my husband and I are very happy together. We always have been ; we always shall be ; we can't help it. Being with us your husband had to—to contemplate our happiness. It—I suppose it reminded him——"

She stopped ; she could not bring herself to say it. Again her eyes rested upon " Wedded," and, in spite of her long conviction of its essential banality—she classed it with " The Soul's Awakening," " Harmony," and all the things she was farthest away from—she felt what it stood for painfully, almost mysteriously.

" One day," she resumed, speaking more slowly, and trying to banish emotion from her voice, " I went out from the hotel where we stayed at Brûsa quite alone. There's a mosque at Brûsa called Jeshil Jami, the Green Mosque. It stands above the valley. It is one of the most beautiful things I know, and quite the most beautiful Osmanli building. I like to go there alone. Very often there is no one in the mosque. Well, I went there that day. When I went in—the guardian was on the terrace ; he knows me and that I'm the British Ambassadress, and never bothers me—I thought at first the mosque was quite empty. I sat down close to the door. After I had been there two or three minutes I felt there was some one else in the mosque. I looked round. Before the Mihrab there was a man. It was your husband. He was kneeling on the matting, but—but he wasn't praying. When I knew, when I heard what he was doing, I went away at once. I couldn't—I felt that——"

Again she paused. In the pause she heard the gale tearing at the windows. She looked at the woman in the sister's dress. Rosamund was sitting motionless, and was now looking down. Lady Ingleton positively hated the sister's dress at that moment. She thought of it as a sort of armour in which her visitor was encased, an armour which rendered her invulnerable. What shaft could penetrate that smooth black and white, that flowing panoply, and reach the heart Lady Ingleton desired to pierce ? Suddenly Lady Ingleton felt cruel. She longed to tear away from Rosamund all the religion which seemed to be protecting her ; she longed to see her naked as Dion Leith was naked.

" I didn't care to look upon a man in hell," she said, in a

voice which had become almost brutal, a voice which Sir Carey would scarcely have recognized if he had heard it.

Rosamund said nothing, and, after a moment, Lady Ingleton continued:

"With us on the yacht was one of my husband's secretaries of Embassy, Cyril Vane, who had just become engaged to be married. He is married now. In his cabin on the yacht he had a photograph of the girl. One night he was walking up and down on deck with your husband, and your husband—I'd just told him about Vane's engagement—congratulated him. Vane invited Mr. Leith into the cabin and showed him the photograph. Vane told me afterwards that he should never forget the look on your husband's face as he took the photograph and gazed at it. When he put it down he said to Vane, 'I hope you may be happy. She looks very kind, and very good, too; but there's no cruelty on earth like the cruelty of a good woman.'" (Did the sister's dress rustle faintly?) "Vane—he's only a boy—was very angry for a moment, though he's usually imperturbable. I don't know exactly what he said, but I believe he made a rather strong protest about knowing his fiancée's character *au fond*. Anyhow, your husband took hold of his arm and said to him, 'Don't love very much and you may be happy. That's the only chance for a man—not to love the woman very much.' Vane came to me and told me. I remember it was late at night and my husband was there. When Vane was leaving us Carey said to him, 'Forget the advice that poor fellow gave you. Love her as much as you can, my boy. Dion Leith speaks out of the bitterness that is destroying him. But very few men can love as he can, and very few men have been punished by their love as he has been punished by his. His sorrow is altogether exceptional, and has made him lose the power of moral vision. His soul has been poisoned at the source.' My husband was right."

"You came here to tell me that?" said Rosamund, lifting her head and speaking coldly and very clearly.

"I didn't know what I was going to tell you. At the time I am speaking of I had no thought of ever trying to see you. That thought came to me long afterwards."

"Why?"

"I'm a happy woman. In my happiness I've learnt to respect love very much, and I've learnt to recognize it at a glance. Your husband is the victim of a great love, Mrs.

Leith. I feel as if I couldn't stand by and see him utterly destroyed by it."

"Father Robertson tells me——" said Rosamund.

And then she was silent. All this time she was struggling almost furiously against pride and an intense reserve which seemed trying to suffocate every good impulse within her. She held on to the thought of Father Robertson (she was unable to hold on to the thought of God); she strove not to hate the woman who was treading in her sanctuary, and whose steps echoed harshly and discordantly to its farthest, its holiest recesses; but she felt herself to be hardening against her will, to be congealing, turning to ice. Nevertheless she was resolute not to leave the room in which she was without learning all that this woman had to tell her.

"Yes?" said Lady Ingleton.

And the thought went through her mind:

"Oh, how she is hating me!"

"Father Robertson told me there was something else."

"Yes, there is. Otherwise I might never have come here. I'm partly to blame. But I—but I can't possibly go into details. You mustn't ask me for any details, please. Try to accept the little I can say as truth, though I'm not able to give you any proof. You must know that women who are intelligent, and have lived long in the—well, in the sort of world I've lived in, are never mistaken about certain things. They don't need what are called proofs. They know certain things are happening or not happening, without holding any proofs for or against. Your husband has got into the wrong hands."

"What do you mean by that?" said Rosamund steadily, even obstinately.

"In his misery and absolute loneliness he has allowed himself to be taken possession of by a woman. She is doing him a great deal of harm. In fact she is ruining him."

She stopped. Perhaps she suspected that Rosamund, in defiance of her own denial of proofs, would begin asking for them; but Rosamund said nothing.

"He is going down," Lady Ingleton resumed. "He has already deteriorated terribly. I saw him recently by chance in Stamboul (he never comes to us now), and I was shocked at his appearance. When I first met him, in spite of his bitterness and intense misery I knew at once that I was with a man of fine nature. There was something unmistakable, the rare imprint; that's fading from him now. You know Father

Robertson very well. I don't. But the very first time I was with him I knew he was a man who was seeking the heights. Your husband now is *seeking* the depths, as if he wanted to hide himself and his misery in them. Perhaps he hasn't found the lowest yet. I believe there is only one human being who can prevent him from finding it. I'm quite sure there is only one human being. That's why I came here."

She was silent. Then she added:

"I've told you now what I wished to tell you, all I can tell you."

In thinking beforehand of what this interview would probably be like Lady Ingleton had expected it to be more intense, charged with greater surface emotion than was the case. Now she felt a strange coldness in the room. The dry rattling of the window under the assault of the gale was an interpolated sound that was in place.

"Your husband has never mentioned your name to me," she said, influenced by an afterthought. "And yet I've come here, because I know that the only hope of salvation for him is here."

Again her eyes went to "Wedded," and then to the sister's dress and close-fitting headgear which disguised Rosamund. And suddenly the impulsiveness which was her inheritance from her Celtic and Latin ancestors took complete possession of her. She got up swiftly and went to Rosamund.

"You hate me for having come here, for having told you all this. You will always hate me, I think. I've intruded upon your peaceful life in religion—your peaceful, comfortable, sheltered life."

Her great dark eyes fixed themselves upon the cross which lay on Rosamund's breast. She lifted her hand and pointed to it.

"You've nailed *him* on a cross," she said, with almost fierce intensity. "How can you be happy in that dress, worshipping God with a lot of holy women?"

"Did I tell you I was happy?" said Rosamund.

She got up and stood facing Lady Ingleton. Her face still preserved something of its coldness, but the colour had deepened in the cheeks, and the expression in the eyes had changed. They looked now much less like the eyes of a "sister" than they had looked when she came into the room.

"Take off that dress and go to Constantinople!" said Lady Ingleton.

Rosamund flushed deeply, painfully; her mouth trembled, and tears came into her eyes, but she spoke resolutely.

"Thank you for telling me," she said. "You were right to come here and to tell me. If I hate you, as you say, that's my fault, not yours."

She paused. It was evident that she was making a tremendous effort to conquer something; she even shut her eyes for a brief instant. Then she added in a very low voice:

"Thank you!"

And she put out her hand.

Tears started into Lady Ingleton's eyes as she took the hand. Rosamund turned and went quickly out of the room.

Some minutes after she had gone Lady Ingleton heard rain beating upon the window. The sound reminded her of the umbrella she had "stood" in the corner of the room when Rosamund came in. It was still there. Impulsively she went to the corner and took it up; then, realizing that Rosamund must already be on her way, she laid it down on the table. She stood for a moment looking from "Wedded" to the damp umbrella.

Then she sat down on the sofa and cried impetuously.

## CHAPTER XII

IT was the month of May. Already there had been several unusually hot days in Constantinople, and Mrs. Clarke was beginning to think about the villa at Buyukdere. She was getting very tired of Pera. She had fulfilled her promise to Dion Leith. She had given up going to England for Jimmy's Christmas holidays and had spent the whole winter in Constantinople. But now she had had enough of it for the present, indeed more than enough of it.

She was feeling weary of the everlasting diplomatic society, of the *potins* political and social, of the love affairs and intrigues of her acquaintances which she knew of or divined, of the familiar voices and faces. She wanted something new; she wanted to break away. The restlessness that was always in her, concealed beneath her pale aspect

of calm, was persecuting her as the spring with its ferment drew near to the torrid summer.

The spring had got into her veins and had made her long for novelty.

One morning when Sonia came into Mrs. Clarke's bedroom with the coffee she brought a piece of news.

"Miladi Ingleton arrived at the Embassy from England yesterday," said Sonia, in her thick, soft voice.

The apparent recovery of Lady Ingleton's mother had been a deception. She had had a relapse almost immediately after Lady Ingleton's return from Liverpool to London; an operation had been necessary, and Lady Ingleton had been obliged to stay on in England for several weeks. During this time Mrs. Clarke had had no news from her. Till Sonia's announcement she had not known the date fixed for her friend's return. She received the information with her usual inflexibility, and merely said:

"I'll go to see her this afternoon."

Then she took up a newspaper which Sonia had brought in with her and began to sip the coffee.

As soon as she was dressed she sent a note to the British Embassy to ask if her friend would be in at tea-time.

Lady Ingleton drew her brows together when she read it. She was delighted to be again in Constantinople, for she had missed Carey quite terribly, but she wished that Cynthia Clarke was anywhere else. Ever since her visit to Liverpool she had been dreading the inevitable meeting with the friend whose secret she had betrayed. Yet the meeting must take place. She would be obliged some day to look once more into Cynthia Clarke's earnest and distressed eyes. When that happened would she hate herself very much for what she had done? She had often wondered. She wondered now, as she read the note written in her friend's large upright hand, as she wrote a brief answer to say she would be in after five o'clock that day.

She was troubled by the fact that her visit to Liverpool had not yielded the result she had hoped for. Rosamund Leith had not sought her husband. But she had taken off the sister's dress and had given up living in the north.

Lady Ingleton knew this from Father Robertson, with whom she corresponded. She had never seen Rosamund or heard from her since the interview in the Adelphi Hotel. And she was troubled, although she had recently received from Father Robertson a letter ending with these words:

"Pressure would be useless. I have found by experience that one cannot hurry the human soul. It must move at its own pace. You have done your part. Try to leave the rest with confidence in other hands. Through you she knows the truth of her husband's condition. She has given up the Sisterhood. Surely that means that she has taken the first step on the road that leads to Constantinople."

But now May was here with its heat, and its sunshine, and its dust, and Lady Ingleton must soon meet the eyes of Cynthia Clarke, and the man she had striven to redeem was unredeemed.

She sighed as she got up from her writing-table. Perhaps perversely she felt that she would mind meeting Cynthia Clarke less if her treachery had been rewarded by the accomplishment of her purpose. A useless treachery seemed to her peculiarly unpardonable. She hated having done a wrong without securing a *quid pro quo*. Even if Father Robertson were right, and Rosamund Leith's departure from the Sisterhood were the first step on the road to Constantinople, she might arrive too late.

Although she was once more with Carey, Lady Ingleton felt unusually depressed.

Soon after five the door of her boudoir was opened by a footman, and Mrs. Clarke walked slowly in, looking, Lady Ingleton thought, even thinner, even more haggard and grave than usual. She was perfectly dressed in a gown that was a marvel of subtle simplicity, and wore a hat that drew just enough attention to the lovely shape of her small head.

"Certainly she has the most delicious head I ever saw," was Lady Ingleton's first (preposterous) thought. "And the strongest will I ever encountered," was the following thought, as she looked into her friend's large eyes.

After they had talked London and Paris for a few minutes Lady Ingleton changed the subject, and with a sort of languid zest, which was intended to conceal a purpose she desired to keep secret, began to speak of Pera and of the happenings there while she had been away. Various acquaintances were discussed, and presently Lady Ingleton arrived, strolling, at Dion Leith.

"Mr. Leith is still here, isn't he?" she asked. "Carey hasn't seen him lately but thinks he is about."

"Oh yes, he is still here," said Mrs. Clarke's husky voice.

"What does he do? How does he pass his time?"

"I often wonder," replied Mrs. Clarke, squeezing a lemon into her cup, which was full of clear China tea.

She put the lemon, thoroughly squeezed, down on its plate, looking steadily at her friend, and continued:

"You remember last summer when I asked you to be kind to him, and told you why I was interested in him, poor fellow?"

"Oh yes."

"I really thought at that time it would be possible to assist him to get back into life, what we understand by life. You helped me like a true friend."

"Oh, I really did nothing!"

"You enabled me to continue my acquaintance with him here," said Mrs. Clarke inflexibly.

Lady Ingleton was silent, and Mrs. Clarke continued:

"You know what I did, my efforts to interest him in all sorts of things. I even got Jimmy out because I knew Mr. Leith was fond of him, threw them together, even tried to turn Mr. Leith into a sort of holiday tutor. Anything to take him out of himself. Later on, when Jimmy went back to England, I thought I would try hard to wake up Dion Leith's mind."

"Did you?" said Lady Ingleton, in her most languid voice.

"I took him about in Stamboul. I showed him all the interesting things that travellers as a rule know nothing about. I tried to make him feel Stamboul. I even spent the winter here chiefly because of him, though, of course, nobody must know that but you."

"Entendu, ma chère!"

"But I've made a complete failure of it all."

"You mean that Mr. Leith can't take up life again?"

"He simply doesn't care for the things of the mind. He has very few mental resources. I imagined that there was very much more in him to work upon than there is. If his heart receives a hard blow, an intellectual man can always turn for consolation to the innumerable things of art, philosophy, literature, that are food for the mind. But Mr. Leith unfortunately isn't an intellectual man. And another thing——"

She had been speaking very quietly; now she paused.

"Yes?" said Lady Ingleton.

"Jimmy came out for the Easter holidays. It was absurd, because they're so short, but I had to see him, and I couldn't

very well go to England. Well, Jimmy's taken a violent dislike to Mr. Leith."

"I thought Jimmy was very fond of him."

"He was devoted to him, but now he can't bear him. In fact, Jimmy won't have anything to do with Dion Leith. I suppose—boys of that age are often very sharp—I suppose he sees the deterioration in Mr. Leith and it disgusts him."

"Deterioration!" said Lady Ingleton, leaning forward, and speaking more impulsively than before.

"Yes. It is heart-rending."

"Really!"

"And it makes things difficult for me."

"I'm sorry for that."

There was a moment of silence; then, as Mrs. Clarke did not speak, but sat still wrapped in a haggard immobility, Lady Ingleton said:

"When do you go to Buyukdereh?"

"I shall probably go next week. I'm very tired of Pera."

"You look tired."

"I didn't mean physically. I'm never physically tired."

"Extraordinary woman!" said Lady Ingleton, with a faint, unhumorous smile. "Come and see some Sèvres I picked up at Christie's. Carey is delighted with it, although, of course, horrified at the price I paid for it."

She got up and went with Mrs. Clarke into one of the drawing-rooms. Dion Leith was not mentioned again.

That evening the Ingletons dined alone. Sir Carey said he must insist on a short honeymoon even though they were obliged to spend it in an Embassy. They had dinner in Bohemian fashion on a small round table in Lady Ingleton's boudoir, and were waited upon by Sir Carey's valet, a middle-aged Italian who had been for many years in his service and who had succeeded, in the way of Italian servants, in becoming one of the family. The Pekinese lay around solaced by the arrival of their mistress and of their doyenne.

When dinner was over and Sir Carey had lit his cigar, he breathed a sigh of contentment.

"At last I'm happy once more after all those months of solitude!"

He looked across at his wife, and added:

"But are you happy at being with me again?"

She smiled.

"Yes," he said. "I know, of course."

"Then why do you ask?"

"Well, I'm a trained observer, like every competent diplomatist, and—there's something. I see in the lute of your happiness a tiny rift. It's scarcely visible, but—I see it."

"I'm not quite happy to-night."

"And you won't tell me why, on our honeymoon?"

"I want to tell you but I can't. I have no right to tell you."

"You only can judge of that."

"I've done something that even you might think abominable, something treacherous. I had a great reason—but still!" She sighed. "I shall never be able to tell you what it is, because to do that would increase my sin. To-night I'm realizing that I'm not at all sorry for what I have done. And that not being sorry—as well as something else—makes me unhappy in a new way. It's all very complicated."

"Like Balkan politics! Shall we"—he looked round the room meditatively—"shall we set the dogs at it?"

She smiled.

"Even they couldn't drive my *tristesse* quite away. You have more power with me than many dogs. Read me something. Read me 'Rabbi ben Ezra.'"

Sir Carey went to fetch the exorcizer.

The truth was that Lady Ingleton's interview with Cynthia Clarke had made her realize two things: that since she had come to know Father Robertson, and had betrayed to him the secret of her friend's life, any genuine feeling of liking she had had for Cynthia Clarke had died; and that Cynthia Clarke was tired of Dion Leith.

That day Mrs. Clarke's hypocrisy had, perhaps for the first time, absolutely disgusted, and even almost horrified, Lady Ingleton. For years Lady Ingleton had known of it, but for years she had almost admired it. The cleverness, the subtlety, the competence of it had entertained her mind. She had respected, too, the courage which never failed Mrs. Clarke. But she was beginning to see her with new eyes. Perhaps Father Robertson had given his impulsive visitor a new moral vision.

During the conversation that afternoon at certain moments Lady Ingleton had almost hated Cynthia Clarke—when Cynthia had spoken of trying to wake up Dion Leith's mind, of his not being an intellectual man, of Jimmy Clarke's shrinking from him because of his deterioration. And when

Cynthia had said that deterioration was "heart-rending" Lady Ingleton had quite definitely detested her. This feeling of detestation had persisted while, in the drawing-room, Cynthia was lovingly appreciating the new acquisition of Sèvres. Lady Ingleton sickened now when she thought of the lovely hands sensitively touching, feeling, the thin china. There really was something appalling in the delicate mentality, in the subtle taste, of a woman in whom raged such devastating physical passions.

Lady Ingleton shuddered as she remembered her conversation with her "friend." But it had brought about something. It had driven away any lingering regret of hers for having spoken frankly to Father Robertson. Cynthia was certainly tired of Dion Leith. Was she about to sacrifice him as she had sacrificed others? Lady Ingleton dreaded the future. For during the interview at the Adelphi Hotel she had realized Rosamund's innate and fastidious purity. To forgive even one infidelity would be a tremendous moral triumph in such a woman as Rosamund. But if Cynthia Clarke threw Dion Leith away, and he fell into promiscuous degradation, then surely Rosamund's nature would rise up in inevitable revolt. Even if she came to Constantinople then it would surely be too late.

Lady Ingleton had seen clearly enough into the mind of Cynthia Clarke, but there was hidden from her the greater part of a human drama not yet complete.

Combined with the ugly passion which governed her life, Mrs. Clarke had an almost wild love of personal freedom. As much as she loved to fetter she hated to be fettered. This hatred had led her into many difficulties during the course of her varied life, difficulties which had always occurred at moments when she wanted to get rid of people. Ever since she had grown up there had been recurring epochs when she had been tormented by the violent desire to rid herself of some one whom she had formerly longed for, whom she had striven to bind to her. Until now she had always eventually succeeded in breaking away from those who were beginning to involve her in weariness or to disgust her. There had sometimes been perilous moments, painful scenes, bitter recriminations. But by the exercise of her indomitable power of will, helped by her exceptional lack of scruple, she had always managed to accomplish her purpose. She had always found hitherto that she was more pitiless, and therefore more efficient, than anyone opposed to her in a severe struggle of

wills. But Dion Leith was beginning to cause her serious uneasiness. She had known from the beginning of their acquaintance that he was an exceptional man; since his tragedy she had realized that the exceptional circumstances of his life had accentuated his individuality. In sorrow, in deterioration, he had broken loose from restraint. She had helped to make him what he had now become, the most difficult man she had ever had to deal with. When he had crossed the river to her he had burnt all the boats behind him. If he had sometimes been weak in goodness, in those former days long past, in what he considered as evil—Mrs. Clarke did not see things in white and black—he had developed a peculiar persistence and determination which were very like strength.

Looking back, Mrs. Clarke realized that the definite change in Dion, which marked the beginning of a new development, dated from the night in the garden at Buyukdereh when Jimmy had so nearly learnt the truth. On that night she had forced Dion to save her reputation with her child by lying and playing the hypocrite to a boy who looked up to him and trusted in him. Dion had not forgotten his obedience. Perhaps he hated her because of it in some secret place of his soul. She was sure that he intended to make her pay for it. He had obeyed her in what she considered as a very trifling matter. (For of course Jimmy had to be deceived.) But since then he had often shown a bitter, even sometimes a brutal, disposition to make her obey him. She could not fully understand the measure of his resentment because she had none of his sense of honour and did not share his instinctive love of truth. But she knew he had suffered acutely in tricking and lying to Jimmy.

On that night, then, he had burnt his boats. She herself had told him to do it when she had said to him, "Give yourself wholly to me." She was beginning to regret that she had ever said that.

At first, in her perversity, she had curiously enjoyed Dion's misery. It had wrapped him in a garment that was novel. It had thrown about him a certain romance. But now she was becoming weary of it. She had had enough of it and enough of him. That horrible process, which she knew so well, had repeated itself once more: she had wanted a thing; she had striven for it; she had obtained it; she had enjoyed it (for she knew well how to enjoy and never thought that the game was not worth the candle). And then, by slow,

almost imperceptible degrees, her power of enjoyment had begun to lessen. Day by day it had lost in strength. She had tried to stimulate it, to deceive herself about its decay, but the time had come, as it had come to her many times in the past, when she had been forced to acknowledge to herself that it was no longer living but a corpse. Dion Leith had played his part in her life. She wished now to put him outside of her door. She had made sacrifices for him; for him she had run risks. All that was very well so long as he had had the power to reward her. But now she was beginning to brood over those risks, those sacrifices, with resentment, to magnify them in her mind; she was beginning to be angry as she dwelt upon that which distortedly she thought of as her unselfishness.

After Jimmy had left Turkey to go back to Eton, and the summer had died, Mrs. Clarke had fulfilled her promise to Dion. She had settled at Pera for the winter, and she had arranged his life for him. From the moment of Jimmy's departure Dion had given himself entirely to her. He had even given himself with a sort of desperation. She had been aware of his fierce concentration, and she had tasted it with a keenness of pleasure, she had savoured it deliberately and fully in the way of an epicure. The force of his resolution towards evil—it was just that—had acted upon her abominably sensitive temperament as a strong tonic. That period had been the time when, to her, the game was worth the candle, was worth a whole blaze of candles.

Already, then, Dion had begun to show the new difficult man whom she, working hand in hand with sorrow, had helped to create within him; but she had at first enjoyed his crudities of temper, his occasional outbursts of brutality, his almost fierce roughness and the hardness which alternated with his moments of passion.

She had understood that he was flinging away with furious hands all the baggage of virtue he had clung to in the past, that he was readjusting his life, was reversing all the habits which had been familiar and natural to him in the existence with Rosamund. So much the better, she had thought. The fact that he was doing this proved to her her power over him. She had smiled, in her unsmiling way, upon his efforts to do what she had told him to do, to cut away the cancer that was in him and to cut away all that was round it. Away with the old moralities, the old hatred of lies and deceptions, the old love of sanity and purity of life.

But away, too, with the old reverence for, and worship of, the woman possessed.

Dion had taken to heart a maxim once uttered to him by Mrs. Clarke in the garden at Buyukdereh. Mention had been made of the very foolish and undignified conduct of a certain woman in Pera society who had been badly treated by a young diplomat. In discussing the matter Dion had chanced to say:

"But if she does such things how can any man respect her?"

Mrs. Clarke's reply, spoken with withering sarcasm, had been:

"Women don't want to be *respected* by men."

Dion had not forgotten that saying. It had sunk deep into his heart. He had come to believe it. Even when he thought of Rosamund still he believed it. He had respected her, and had shown his respect in the most chivalrous way at his command, and she had never really loved him. Evidently women were not what he had thought they were. Mrs. Clarke knew what they were and a thousand things that he did not know. He grasped at her cynicism, and he often applied it, translated through his personality, to herself. He even went farther in cynicism than she had ever gone, behaving like a convert to a religion which had the charm of novelty. He praised her for her capacities as a liar, a hypocrite, a subtle trickster, a thrower of dust in the eyes of her world. One of his favourite names for her was "dust-thrower." Sometimes he abused her. She believed that at moments he detested her. But he clung to her and he did not mean to give her up. And she knew that.

After that horrible night when Jimmy had waked up she had succeeded in making Dion believe that he was deeply loved by her. She had really had an ugly passion for him, and she had contrived easily enough to dress it up and present it as love. And he clung to that semblance of love, because it was all that he had, because it was a weapon in his hand, and because he had made for it a sacrifice. He had sacrificed the truth that was in him, and he had received in part payment the mysterious dislike of the boy who had formerly looked up to him.

Jimmy had never been friendly with Dion since the night of their search for his mother in the garden.

His manner towards his mother had changed but little. He was slightly more reserved with her than he had been. Her faint air of sarcasm when, in Sonia's room, he had shown

her his boyish agitation, had made a considerable impression upon him. He was unable to forget it. And he was a little more formal with his mother; showed her, perhaps, more respect than before. But the change was trifling. His respect for Dion, however, was obviously dead. Indeed he had begun to show a scarcely veiled hostility towards Dion in the summer holidays, and in the recent Easter holidays, spent by him in Pera, he had avoided Dion as much as possible.

"That fellow still here!" he had said, with boyish gruffness, when his mother had first mentioned Dion's name immediately after his arrival. And when he had seen Dion he had said straight out to his mother that he couldn't "stand Leith at any price now." She had asked him why, fixing her eyes upon him, but the only reply she had succeeded in getting had been that he didn't trust the fellow, that he hadn't trusted Leith for a long time.

"Since when?" she had said.

"Can't remember," had been the non-committal answer.

It seemed as if Jimmy had seen through Dion's insincerity in the garden at Buyukdereh. Yet there was nothing to show that he had not accepted his mother's insincerity in Sonia's room at its face value. Even Mrs. Clarke had not been able to understand exactly what was in her boy's mind. But Jimmy's hostility to Dion had troubled her obscurely, and had added to her growing weariness of this intrigue something more vital. Her intelligence divined, rather than actually perceived, the coming into her life of a definite menace to her happiness, if happiness it could be called. She felt as if Jimmy were on the track of her secret, and she was certain that Dion was the cause of the boy's unpleasant new alertness. In the past she had taken risks for Dion. But she had had the great reason of what she chose to call passion. That reason was gone now. She was resolved not to take the greatest of all risks for a man whom she wanted to get rid of.

She was resolved; but she encountered now in Dion a resolve which she had not suspected he was capable of, and which began to render her seriously uneasy.

Lady Ingleton's remark, "You look tired," had struck unpleasantly on Mrs. Clarke's ears, and she came away from the Embassy that day with them in her mind. She was on foot. As she came out through the great gateway of the Embassy she remembered that she had been coming from it on that day in June when she had seen Dion Leith for the

first time in Pera. A sharp thrill had gone through her that day. He had come. He had obeyed the persistent call of her will. What she had desired for so long would be. And she had been fiercely glad for two reasons : one an ordinary reason, the other less ordinary, a mysterious reason of the mind. If her will had played her false for once, had proved inadequate, she would have suffered strangely. When she knew it had not she had triumphed. But now, as she walked onward slowly, she wished she had never seen Dion Leith in Pera, she wished that her will had played her false. It would have been better so, for she was in a difficult situation, and she foresaw that it was going to become more difficult. She was assailed by that recurring desire which is the scourge of the sensualist, the desire to rid herself violently, abruptly and for ever of the possession she had schemed and made long efforts to obtain. Her torch was burnt out. She wished to stamp out the flame of another torch which still glowed with a baleful fire.

" And Delia has noticed something ! " she thought.

The thought was scarcely out of her mind when she came face to face with Dion Leith. He stopped before her.

" Have you been to the Embassy ? " he said.

" Yes. Delia Ingleton came back yesterday. You aren't going to call there ? "

" Of course not. I happened to see you walking in that direction, so I thought I would wait for you."

With the manner of a man exercising a right he turned to walk back with her. A flame of irritation scorched her, but she did not show any emotion. She only said quietly :

" You know I am not particularly fond of being seen with men in the Grande Rue."

" Very well. If you like, I'll come to your flat by a round-about way. I'll be there five minutes after you are."

Before she had time to say anything he was gone, striding through the crowd.

Mrs. Clarke walked on and came into the Grande Rue.

She lived in a flat in a street which turned out of the Grande Rue on the left not very far from the Taxim Garden. As she walked on slowly she was trying to make up her mind to force a break with Dion. She had great courage and was naturally ruthless, yet for once she was beset by indecision. She did not any longer feel sure that she could dominate this man. She had bent him to her will when she took him ; but could she do so when she wished to get rid of him ?

When she reached the house, on the second floor of which was her flat, she found him there waiting for her.

"You must have walked very quickly, Dion," she said.

"No, I didn't," he replied brusquely. "You walked very slowly."

"I feel tired to-day."

"I thought you were never tired."

"Every woman is tired sometimes."

They began to ascend the staircase. There was no lift.

"Are you going out to-night?" she heard him say behind her.

"No. I shall go to bed early."

"I'll stay till then."

"You know you can't stay very late here."

She heard him laugh.

"When you've just said you are going to bed early!"

She said nothing more till they reached the flat. He followed her in and put his hat down.

"Will you have tea?"

"No, thanks; nothing."

"Go into the drawing-room. I'll come in a moment."

She left him and went into her bedroom.

He waited for her in the drawing-room. At first he sat down. The room was full of the scent of flowers, and he remembered the strong flowery scent which had greeted him when he visited the villa at Buyukdereh for the first time. How long ago that seemed—æons ago! A few minutes passed, registered by the ticking of a little clock of exquisite bronze work on the mantelpiece. She did not come. He felt restless. He always felt restless in Constantinople. Now he got up and walked about the room, turning sharply from time to time, pausing when he turned, then resuming his walk. Once, as he turned, he found himself exactly opposite to a mirror. He stared into it and saw a man still young, but lined, with sunken eyes, a mouth drooping and bitter, a head on which the dark hair was no longer thick and springy. His hair had retreated from the temples, and this fact had changed his appearance, had lessened his good looks, and at the same time had given to his face an odd suggestion of added intellectuality which was at war with the plain stamp of dissipation imprinted upon it. Even in repose his face was almost horribly expressive. As he stared into the glass he thought:

"If I cut off my moustache I should look like a tragic actor who was a thorough bad lot."

He turned away, frowning, and resumed his walk. Presently he stood still and looked about the room. He was getting impatient. Irritability crept through him. He almost hated Mrs. Clarke for keeping him waiting so long.

"Why the devil doesn't she come?" he thought.

He stood trying to control his nervous anger, clenching his muscular hands, and looking from one piece of furniture to another, from one ornament to another ornament, with quickly shifting eyes.

His attention was attracted by something unusual in the room which he had not noticed till now. On a writing-table of ebony near one of the windows he saw a large photograph in a curious frame of ruddy arbutus wood. He had never before seen a photograph in any room lived in by Mrs. Clarke, and he had heard her say that photographs killed a room, and might easily kill, too, with their staring impotence, any affection one felt for the friends they represented. Whose photograph could this be which triumphed over such a dislike? He walked to the table, bent down and saw a standing boy in flannels, bare-headed, with thick, disordered hair and bare arms, holding in his large hands a cricket bat. It was Jimmy, and his eyes looked straight into Dion's.

A door clicked. There was a faint rustling. Mrs. Clarke walked into the room.

Dion turned round.

"What's this photograph doing here?" he asked roughly.

"Doing?"

"Yes. You hate photographs. I've heard you say so."

"Jimmy gave it to me on my birthday just before he left for England. It's quite a good one."

"You are going to keep it here?"

"Yes, I am going to keep it here. Come and sit down."

He did not move.

"Jimmy loathes me," he said.

"Nonsense."

"He does. Through you he has come to loathe me, and you keep his photograph here——"

"I don't allow anyone to criticize what I do in my own drawing-room," she interrupted. "You are really childish to-day."

His intense irritability had communicated itself to her. She felt an almost reckless desire to get rid of him. His

look of embittered wretchedness tormented her nerves. She wondered how it had ever been able to interest her, even to lure her. She was amazed at her own perversity.

"I cannot allow you to come here if you are going to try to interfere with my arrangements," she added, with a sort of fierce coldness.

"I have a right to come here."

"You have not. You have no rights over me, none at all. I have made a great many sacrifices for you, far too many, but I shall never sacrifice my complete independence for you or for anyone."

"Sacrifices for me!" he exclaimed.

He snatched up the photograph, held it with both his hands, exerted his strength, smashed the glass, broke the frame, tore the photograph in half, and threw it, the fragments of red wood and the bits of glass on the table.

"You've made your boy hate me, and you shan't have him there," he said savagely.

"How dare you!" she exclaimed, in a low, hoarse voice.

She flung out her hands. In snatching at the ruined photograph she picked up with it a fragment of glass. It cut her hand slightly, and a thin thread of blood ran down over her white skin.

"Oh, your hand!" exclaimed Dion, in a changed voice. "It's bleeding!"

He pulled out his handkerchief.

"Leave it alone! I forbid you to touch it!"

She put the fragments of the photograph inside her dress, gently, tenderly even. Then she turned and faced him.

"To-morrow I shall telegraph to England for another photograph to be sent out, and it will stand here," she said, pointing with her bleeding hand at the writing-table. "It will always stand on my table here and in the Villa Hafiz."

Then she bound her own handkerchief about her hand and rang the bell. Sonia came.

"I've stupidly cut my hand, Sonia. Come and tie it up. Mr. Leith is going in a moment, and then you shall bathe it."

Sonia looked at Dion, and, without a word, adjusted the handkerchief deftly, and pinned it in place with a safety-pin which she drew out of her dress. Then she left the room with her flat-footed walk. As she shut the door Dion said doggedly:

"You'd better let her bathe it now, because I'm not going in a moment."

"When I ask you to go you will go."

"Sit down. I must speak to you."

He pointed to a large sofa. She went very deliberately to a chair and sat down.

"Why don't you sit on the sofa?"

"I prefer this."

He sat on the sofa.

"I must speak to you about Jimmy."

"Well?"

"What's the matter with him? What have you been up to with him?"

"Nothing."

"Then why should he turn against me and not against you?"

"I don't understand what you mean."

"You do. It's since that night in the garden when you made me lie to him. Ever since that night he's been absolutely different with me. You know it."

"I can t help it."

"He believed your lies to him, apparently. Why doesn't he believe mine?"

"Of course he believed what you told him."

"He didn't, or he wouldn't have changed. He hates your having anything to do with me. He's told you so. I'm sure of it."

"Jimmy would never dare to do that."

"Anyhow, you know he does."

She did not deny it.

"Remember this," Dion said, looking straight at her, "I'm not going to be sacrificed a second time on account of a child."

After a long pause, during which Mrs. Clarke sat without moving, her lovely head leaning against a cushion which was fastened near the top of the back of her chair, she said:

"What do you mean exactly by being sacrificed, Dion?"

Her manner had changed. The hostility had gone out of it. Her husky voice sounded gentle almost, and she looked at him earnestly.

"I mean just this: my life with the woman I once cared for was smashed to pieces by a child, my own dead child. I'm not going to allow my life with you to be smashed to pieces by Jimmy. Isn't a man more than a child? Can't he feel more than a child feels, give more than a child can

give ? Isn't a thing full grown as valuable, as worth having, as a thing that's immature ? "

He spoke with almost passionate resentment.

" D'you mean to tell me that a man's love always means less to a woman than a child's love means ? "

Silently, while he spoke, she compared the passion she had had for Dion Leith with the love she would always have for Jimmy. The one was dead ; the other could not die. That was the difference between such things.

" The two are so different that it is useless to compare them," she replied. " Surely you could not be jealous of a child."

" I could be jealous of anything that threatened me in my life with you. It's all I've got now, and I won't have it interfered with."

" But neither must you attempt to interfere with my life with my child," she said, very calmly.

" You dragged me into your life with Jimmy. You have always used Jimmy as a means. It began long ago in London when you were at Claridge's."

" There is no need——"

" There is need to make you see clearly why I have every right to take a stand now against—against——"

" Against what ? "

" I feel you're changing. I don't trust you. You are not to be trusted. Since Jimmy has been here again I feel that you are different."

" I am obliged to be specially careful now the boy is beginning to grow up. He notices things now he wouldn't have noticed a year or two ago. And it will get worse from year to year. That isn't my fault."

His sunken eyes looked fixedly at her from the midst of the network of wrinkles which disfigured his face.

" Now what are you trying to lead up to ? " he said.

" It's very foolish of you to be always suspicious. Only stupid people are always suspecting others of sharp practice."

" I'm stupid compared with you, but I'm not so tupid that I haven't learnt to know you better than other people know you, better, probably, than anyone else on earth knows you. It is entirely through you that Jimmy has got to hate me. I'm not going to let you use his hatred of me as a weapon against me. I've been wanting to tell you this, but I thought I'd wait till he had gone."

" Why should I want to use a weapon against you ? "

"I don't know. It isn't always easy to know why you want things. You're such an inveterate liar, and so tricky, that you'd puzzle the devil himself."

"Do you realize that all you are saying to-day implies something? It implies that in your opinion I am not a free agent, that you consider you have a right to govern my actions. But I deny that."

She spoke firmly, but without any heat.

"Do you mean to say that what we are to each other gives me no more rights over you than mere acquaintances have?"

"It gives you no more rights over me than mere acquaintances have."

He sat looking at her for a minute. Then he said:

"Cynthia, come and sit here, please, beside me."

"Why should I?"

"Please come."

"Very well."

She got up, came to the sofa with a sort of listless decision, and sat down beside him. He took her uninjured hand. His hand was burning with heat. He closed and unclosed his fingers as he went on speaking.

"What is there in such a relation as ours if it carries no rights? You have altered my whole life. Is that nothing? I live out here only because of you. I have nothing out here but you. All these months, ever since we left Buyukdereh, I've lived just as you wished. I went into society at Buyukdereh because you wanted me to. When you didn't care any more about my doing that I lived in the shade in Galata. I've fallen in with every deception you thought necessary. I've told every lie you wished me to tell. Ever since you made me lie to Jimmy I haven't cared much. But you'll never know, because you can't understand such things, what the loss of Jimmy's confidence and respect has meant to me. However, that's all past. I'm as much of a hypocrite as you are; I'm as false as you are; I'm as rotten as you are—with other people. But don't, for God's sake, let's be rotten with each other. That would be too foul, like thieves falling out."

"I've always been perfectly straight with you," she said coldly. "I have nothing to reproach myself with."

The closing of his fingers on her hand, and their unclosing, irritated her whole body. To-day she disliked his touch intensely, so intensely that she could scarcely believe she had ever liked it, longed for it, schemed for it.

"Please keep your hand still!" she said.

"What?"

"It makes me nervous your doing that. Either hold my hand or don't hold it."

"I don't understand. What was I doing?"

"Oh, never mind. I've always been straight with you. I don't know why you are attacking me."

"I feel you are changing towards me. So I thought I'd tell you that I don't intend to be driven out a second time by a child. It's better you should know that. Then you won't attempt the impossible."

She looked into his sunken eyes.

"Jimmy has got to dislike you," she said. "It's unfortunate, but it can't be helped. I don't know exactly why it is so. It may be because he's older, just at the age when boys begin to understand about men and women. You're not always quite so careful before him as you might be. I don't mean in what you say, but in your manner. I think Jimmy fancies you like me in a certain way. I think he probably took it into his head that you were hanging about the garden that night because perhaps you hoped to meet me there. A very little more and he might begin to suspect me. You have been frank with me to-day. I'll be frank with you. I want you to understand that if there ever was a question of my losing Jimmy's love and respect I should fight to keep them, sacrifice anything to keep them. Jimmy comes first with me, and always will. It couldn't be otherwise. I prefer that you should know it."

He shot a glance at her that was almost cunning. She had been prepared for a perhaps violent outburst, but he only said:

"Jimmy won't be here again for some time, so we needn't bother about him."

She was genuinely surprised, but she did not show it.

"It was you who brought up the question," she said.

"Never mind. Don't worry about it. If Jimmy comes out for the summer holidays——"

"He will, of course."

"Then I can go away from Buyukdereh just for those few weeks."

"I——" She paused; then she went on: "I must tell you that you mustn't come to Buyukdereh again this summer."

"Then you won't go there?"

"Of course I must go. I have the villa. I am going there next week."

"If you go, then I shall go. But I'll leave when Jimmy comes, as you are so fussed about him."

She could scarcely believe that it was Dion who was speaking to her. Often she had heard him speak violently, irritably, even cruelly and rudely. But there was a sort of ghastly softness in this voice. His hand still held hers, but its grasp had relaxed. In his touch, as in his voice, there was a softness which disquieted her.

"I'm sorry, but I can't let you come to Buyukdereh this summer," she said. "Once did not matter. But if you came again my reputation would suffer."

"Then I'll stay at some other place on the Bosporus and come over."

"That would be just as bad."

"Do you seriously mean that we are to be entirely separated during the whole of this summer?"

"I must be careful of my reputation now Jimmy's growing up. The Bosporus is the home of malicious gossip."

"Do answer my question. Do you mean that we are to be separated during the summer?"

"I don't see how it can be helped."

"It can be helped very easily. Don't go to Buyukdereh."

"I must. I have the villa."

"Let it."

"I couldn't possibly stand Constantinople in the summer."

"There's no need to do that. There are other places besides Constantinople and Buyukdereh. You might go to one of them. Or you might travel."

She sat for a moment looking down.

"Do you mean that I might travel with you?" she said, at last.

"Not with me. But I could happen to be where you are."

"That's not possible. Some one would get to know of it."

"How absurdly *ingénue* you have become all of a sudden!" he said, with soft, but scathing, irony.

And he laughed, let out a long, low, and apparently spontaneous, laugh, as if he were genuinely amused.

"Really one would hardly imagine that you were the heroine of the famous divorce case which interested all London not so very long ago. When I remember the life you acknowledged you had lived, the life you were quite defiant about, I can't help being amused by this sudden access of con-

ventional Puritanism. You declared then that you didn't choose to live a dull, orthodox life. One would suppose that the leopard could change his spots after all."

While he was speaking she lifted her head and looked fixedly at him.

" It's just that very divorce case which has made me alter my way of living," she said. " Anyone who knew anything of the world, anyone but a fool, could see that."

" Ah, but I am a fool," he returned doggedly. " I was a fool when I ran straight, and it seems I'm a fool when I run crooked. You've got to make the best of me as I am. Take your choice. Go to Buyukdereh if you like. If you do I shall stay on the Bosporus. Or travel if you like, and I'll happen to be where you are. It's quite easy. It's done every day. But you know that as well as I do. I can't give you points in the game of throwing dust in the eyes of the public."

" It's too late now to let the villa, even if I cared to. And I can't afford to shut it up and leave it standing empty while I wander about in hotels. I shall go to Buyukdereh next week."

" All right. I'll go back to the rooms I had last year, and we can live as we did then. Give me the key of the garden gate and I can use the pavilion as my sitting-room again. It's all quite simple."

A frown altered her white face. His mention of the pavilion had suddenly recalled to her exactly what she had felt for him last year. She compared it with what she felt for him now. With an impulsive movement she pulled her hand away from his.

" I shall not give you the key. I can't have you there. I will not. People have begun to talk."

" I don't believe it. They never see us together here. You have taken good care of that in the last few months. Why, we've met like thieves in the night."

" Here, yes. In a great town one can manage, but not in a place like Buyukdereh."

He leaned forward and said, with dogged resolution :

" One thing is certain—I will not be separated from you during the summer. Do whatever you like, but remember that. Make your own plans. I will fall in with them. But I shall pass the summer where you pass it."

" I—really I didn't know you cared so much about me," she murmured, with a faint smile.

" Care for you ! "

He stared into her face and the wrinkles twitched about his eyes.

"How should I not care for you?"

He gripped her hand again.

"Haven't you taught me how to live in the dust? Haven't you shown me the folly of being honourable and the fun of deceiving others? Haven't you led me into the dark and made me able to see in it? And there's such a lot to see in the dark! Why, good God, Cynthia, you've remade me, and then you wonder at my caring for you! You make a man in your own image and then you're surprised at his worshipping you. Where's your cleverness?"

"I often believe you detest me."

"Oh, as for that, a woman such as you are can be loved and hated almost at the same time. But she can't be given up. No!"

As she looked at him she saw the red gleam of the torch he carried. Hers had long ago died out into blackness.

"Is it possible that you really wish to ruin my reputation?"

"Not a bit of it! You're so clever that you can always guard against that."

"Yes, I can when I'm dealing with gentlemen," she said, with sudden, vicious sharpness. "But you are behaving like a cad. Of all the men I——"

She stopped. A sort of nervous fury possessed her. It had nearly driven her to make a false step. And yet—would it be a false step? As she paused, looking at Dion, marking the hard obstinacy in his eyes, feeling the hard, hot grip of his hand, it occurred to her that perhaps she had blundered upon the one way out, the way of escape. Amid the wreckage of his beliefs she knew that Dion still held to one belief, which had been shaken once, but which her cool adroitness had saved and made firm in a critical moment. If she destroyed it now would he let her go? Just how low had he fallen through her? She wished she knew. But she did not know, and she waited, looking at him.

"Go on!" he said. "Of all the men you—what?"

"How low down is he? How low down?" she asked herself.

"Can't you go on?" he said brutally.

"Of all the men who have cared for me you are the only man who has ever dared to interfere with my freedom," she said.

Her voice had become almost raucous, and a faint dull red strangely discoloured and altered her face.

"I will not permit it. I shall go to Buyukdereh, and I forbid you to follow me there. Now it's getting late and I'm tired. Please go away."

"Men who have cared for you!"

"Yes. Yes."

"What d'you mean by that? D'you mean Brayfield?"

"Yes."

"Have there been many others who have cared as Brayfield did?"

"Yes."

"Hadi Bey was one of them, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"And Dumeny was another?"

"Yes."

"Poor fellows!"

His lips were smiling, but his eyes looked dreadfully intent and searching.

"You made them suffer and gave them no reward. I can see you doing it and enjoying it."

"That's untrue."

"What is untrue?"

"To say that I gave them no reward."

At this moment there was a tap on the door.

"Come in!" said Mrs. Clarke, in her ordinary voice.

Sonia opened the door and came in.

"Excuse me, Madame," she said, "but you told me I was to bathe your hand. If it is not bathed it will look horrible to-morrow. I have the warm water all ready."

She stood in front of her mistress, broad, awkward and yet capable. Dion felt certain that this woman meant to get rid of him because she was aware that her mistress wanted him to go. He had always realized that Sonia knew Mrs. Clarke better than any other woman did. As for himself—she had never shown any feeling towards him. He did not know whether she liked him or disliked him. But now he knew that he disliked her.

He looked almost menacingly at her.

"Your mistress can't go at present," he said. "Her hand is all right. It was only a scratch."

Sonia looked at her mistress.

"Sonia is quite right," said Mrs. Clarke, getting up. "And as the water is warm I will go. Good-bye."

"I will stay here till you have finished," he said, still looking at Sonia.

"It's getting very late. We might finish our talk to-morrow."

"I will stay."

After a slight pause Mrs. Clarke, whose face was still discoloured with red, turned to the maid and said :

"Go away, Sonia."

Sonia went away very slowly. At the door she stopped for a moment and looked round. Then she disappeared, and the door closed slowly and as if reluctantly behind her.

"Now what did you mean ? " Dion said.

He got up.

"What did you mean ? "

"Simply this, that my husband ought to have won his case."

"Ah ! "

He stood with his hands hanging at his sides, looking impassive, with his head bent and the lids drooping over his eyes. She waited—for her freedom. She did not mind the disgust which she felt like an emanation in the darkening room, if only it would carry him far enough in hatred of her. Would it do that ?

There was a very long silence between them. During it he remained motionless. With his hanging hands and his drooping head he looked, she thought, almost as much like a puppet as like a man. His whole body had a strange aspect of listlessness, almost of feebleness. Yet she knew how muscular and powerful he still was, although he had long ago ceased from taking care of his body. The silence lasted so long, and he stood so absolutely still, that she began to feel uneasy, even faintly afraid. The nerves in her body were tingling. They could have braced themselves to encounter violence, but this immobility and dumbness tormented them. She wanted to speak, to move, but she felt obliged to wait for him. At last he looked up. He came to her, lifted his hands and laid them heavily on her emaciated shoulders.

"So that's what you are ! "

He stared into her haggard face. She met his eyes resolutely.

"That's what you are ! "

"Yes."

"Why have you told me this to-day ? "

"Of course you knew it long ago."

"Answer me. Why have you told me to-day?"

"I don't know."

"I do. You have told me to-day because you have had enough of me. You meant to use Jimmy to get rid of me as you once used him to get to know me more intimately. When you found that wouldn't serve your turn, you made up your mind to speak a word or two of truth. You thought you would disgust me into leaving you."

"Of course you knew it long ago," she repeated in a dull voice.

"I didn't know it. I may have suspected it. In fact, once I did, and I told you so. But you drove out my suspicion. I don't know exactly how. And since then—after you got your verdict in London I saw Dumeny smile at you as he went out of the Court. I have never been able to forget that smile. Now I understand it. One by one you've managed to get rid of them all. And now at last you've arrived at me, and you've said to yourself, 'It's his turn to be kicked out now.' Haven't you?"

"Nothing can last for ever," she murmured huskily.

"No. But this time you're not going to scrawl 'finis' exactly when you want to."

"It's getting dark, and I'm tired. My hand is hurting me."

He gripped her shoulders more firmly.

"If you meant some day to get rid of me, to kick me out as you've kicked out the others," he said grimly, "you shouldn't have made me come to you that night when Jimmy was at Buyukdereh. That was a mistake on your part."

"Why?" she asked, almost in a whisper.

"Because that night through you I lost something; I lost the last shred of my self-respect. Till that night I was still clinging on to it. You struck my hands away and made me let go. Now I don't care. And that's why I'm not going to let you treat me as you've treated the others. I'm not going to let you make the sign of the cross over me and dismiss me into hell. Your list closes with me, Cynthia. I'm not going to give you up."

She shook slightly under his hands.

"Why are you trembling?"

"I'm not trembling; but I'm tired; let me alone."

"You can go to Sonia now if you like, and have your hand bathed."

He lifted his hands from her shoulders, but she did not move.

"What are you going to do?" she asked.

"I shall wait for you here."

"Wait for me?"

"Yes. We'll dine together to-night."

"Where?" she said helplessly.

"Here, if you like."

"There's scarcely anything to eat. I didn't intend——"

"I'll take you out somewhere. It's going to be a dark night. We'll manage so that no one sees us. We'll dine together and, after dinner——"

"I must come home early. I'm very tired."

"After dinner we'll go to those rooms you found so cleverly near the Persian Khan."

She shuddered.

"Now go and bathe your hand, and I'll wait here. Only don't be too long or I shall come and fetch you. And don't send Sonia to make excuses, for it will be no use."

He sat down on the sofa.

She stood for a moment without moving. She put her bandaged hand up to her discoloured face. Then she went slowly out of the room.

He sat waiting for her to come back, with his elbows on his knees and his face hidden in his hands.

He felt like a man sunk in mire. He felt the mire creeping up to his throat.

. . . . . .

Almost at that same hour beside a platform at Victoria Station in London a long train with "Dover" placarded on it was drawn up. Before the door of a first-class carriage two women in plain travelling dresses were standing with a white-haired clergyman. Presently the shorter of the two women said to the other:

"I think I'll get in now, and leave you to last words."

She held out her hand to the clergyman.

"Good-bye, Father Robertson."

He grasped her hand warmly, and looked at her with a great tenderness shining in his eyes.

"Take good care of her. But you will, I know," he said.

Beatrice Daventry got into the carriage, and stood for a moment at the door. There were tears in her eyes as she looked at the two figures now pacing slowly up and down on the platform; she wiped them away quickly, and sat down. She was bound on a long journey. And what would be the end? In her frail body Beatrice had a strong soul, but to-

night she was stricken with a painful anxiety. She said to herself that she cared about something too much. If the object of this journey were not attained she felt it would break her heart. She shut her eyes, and she conjured up a child whom she had loved very much and who was dead.

"Come with us, Robin!" she whispered. "Come with us to your father."

And the whisper was like a prayer.

"Beattie!"

Rosamund's voice was speaking.

"We are just off."

"Are we?"

"Take your seats, please!" shouted a loud bass voice.

There was a sound of the banging of doors.

Rosamund leaned out of the window.

"Good-bye, Father!"

The train began to move.

"Good-bye. *Cor meum vigilat.*"

Rosamund pulled down her veil quickly over her face.

She was weary of rebellion. Yet she knew that deep down within her dwelt one who was still a rebel. She was starting on a great journey, but she could not foresee what would happen at its end. For she no longer knew what she was capable of doing, and what would be too great a task for her poor powers. She was trying; she would try; that was all she knew.

As the train rushed on through the fading light she said to herself again and again:

"*La divina volontate! La divina volontate!*"

## CHAPTER XIII

A WEEK had passed, and the Villa Hafiz had not yet opened its door to receive its mistress. The servants, with the exception of Sonia, had arrived. The Greek butler had everything in order downstairs. Above stairs the big, low bed was made, and there were flowers in the vases dotted about here and there in the blue-and-green sitting-room. Osman, the gardener, had trimmed the rose-bushes, had carefully cleaned the garden seats, and had swept straying

leaves from the winding paths. The fountain sang its under-song above the lilies. On the highest terrace, beyond the climbing garden, the pavilion waited for the woman and man who had hidden themselves in it to go down into the dark-ness. But no one slept in the big, low bed, or sat in the blue-and-green room ; the garden was deserted ; by night no feet trod softly to the pavilion.

For the first time in her life Cynthia Clarke was in the toils. She who loved her personal freedom almost wildly no longer felt free. She dared not go to Buyukdereh.

She looked back to that night when she had told Dion Leith the truth, and it stood out among all the nights of her life, more black and fatal than any of them, because on it she had been false to herself, had been weak. She had not followed up her strength in words by strength in action ! She had allowed Dion Leith to dominate her that night, to make of her against her will his creature. In doing that she had taken a step down—a step away from the path in which hitherto she had always walked. And that departure from inflexible selfishness seemed strangely to have weakened her will.

She was afraid of Dion because she felt that he was un-governable by her, that her will no longer meant anything to him. He did not brace himself to defy it ; simply, he did not bother about it. He seemed to have passed into a region where such a trifle as a woman's will faded away from his perception.

His serpent had swallowed up hers.

She ought to have defied him that night, to have risked a violent scene, to have risked everything. Instead, she had come back to the drawing-room, had gone out into the night with him, had even gone to the rooms near the Persian Khan. She had put off, had said to herself " To-morrow " ; she had tried to believe that Dion's desperate mood would pass, that he needed gentle handling for the moment, and that, if treated with supreme tact, he would eventually be " managed " into letting her have her will.

But now she had no illusions. Her distressed eyes saw quite clearly, and she knew that she had made a fatal mistake in being obedient to Dion that night. She felt like one at the beginning of an inclined plane that was slippery as ice. She had stepped upon it, and she could not step back. She could only go forward and downward.

Dion was reckless. Appeals to reason, to chivalry, to pity,

had no effect upon him. He only laughed at them, took them as part of her game of hypocrisy. In her genuine and growing fear and distress she had become almost horribly sincere, but he would not believe in, or heed, her sincerity. She knew her increasing hatred of him was matched by his secret detestation of her. Yes, he detested her with all that was most characteristic in him, with all those inherent qualities of which, do what he would, he was unable to rid himself. And yet there was a link which bound them together —the link of a common degradation of body. She longed to smash that link which she had so carefully and sedulously laboured to forge. But he wished to make it stronger. By her violent will she had turned him to perversity, and now he was actually more perverse than she was. She saw herself outdistanced on the course towards the ultimate blackness, saw herself forced to follow where he led.

She dared not go to Buyukdereh. She could not, she knew, keep him away from there. He would follow her from Constantinople, would resume his life of last summer, would perhaps deliberately accentuate his intimacy with her instead of being careful to throw over it a veil. In his hatred and recklessness he might be capable even of that, the last outrage which a man can inflict upon a woman, to whose safety and happiness his chivalrous secrecy is essential. His clinging to her in hatred was terrible to her. She began to think that perhaps he had in his mind abominable plans for the destruction of her happiness.

One day he told her that if she went to Buyukdereh he would not only follow her there, but he would remain there when Jimmy came out for the summer holidays.

"Jimmy must learn to like me again," he said. "That is necessary."

She shuddered when she realized the tendency of Dion's mind. Fear made her clairvoyante. There were moments when she seemed to look into that mind as into a room through an open window, to see the thoughts as living things going about their business. There was something appalling in this man's brooding desire to strike her in the heart combined with his determination to continue to be her lover. It affected her as she had never been affected before. By torturing her imagination it made havoc of her will-power. Her situation rendered her almost desperate, and she could not find an outlet from it.

What was she to do? If she went to Buyukdereh she felt

certain there would be a scandal. Even if there were not, she could not now dare to risk having Jimmy out for his holidays. Jimmy and Dion must not meet again. She might travel in the summer, as Dion had suggested, but if she did that she would be forced to endure a solitude *à deux* with him untempered by any social distractions. She could not endure that. To be alone with his bitterness, his misery, and his monopolizing hatred of her would be unbearable. And the problem of Jimmy's holidays would not be solved by travel. Unless she travelled to England!

A gleam of hope came to her as she thought of England. Dion had fled from England. Would he dare to go back there, to the land which had seen his tragedy, and where the woman lived who had cast him out? Mrs. Clarke wondered, turning the thought of England over and over in her mind.

The longer she thought on that matter the more convinced she became that she had hit upon a final test, by means of which it would be possible for her to ascertain Dion's exact mental condition. If he was ready to follow her even to England, to show himself there as her intimate friend, if not as her lover, then the man whom she had known in London was dead indeed beyond hope of resurrection.

She resolved to find out what Dion's feeling about England was.

Since the evening when she had told him the truth she had seen him—he had obliged her to see him—every day, but he had not come again to her flat. They had met in secret, as they had been meeting for many months. For the days when they had wandered about Stamboul together, when she had tried to play to him the part Dumeny had once played to her, were long ago over.

On the day when the thought of England occurred to Mrs. Clarke as a possible place of refuge she had promised to meet Dion late in the evening at their rooms near the Persian Khan. She loathed going to those rooms. They reminded her painfully of all she had felt for Dion and felt no longer. They spoke to her of the secrecy of a passion that was dead. She was afraid of them. But she was still more afraid of seeing Dion in her flat. Nevertheless, now the gleam of hope which had come to her suddenly woke up in her something of her old recklessness. Since the servants had gone to the Villa Hafiz she had been living in the flat with Sonia, who was an excellent cook as well as a capital maid. She resolved to ask Dion to dinner that night, and to

try her fortune once more with him. England must be horrible to him. Then she would go to England. And if he followed her there he would at least be punished for his persecution of her.

Already she called his determination not to break their intrigue persecution. She had a short memory.

After a talk with Sonia she summoned a messenger and sent Dion a note, asking him to dinner that night. He replied that he would come. His answer ended with the words : " We can go to the rooms later."

As Mrs. Clarke read them her fingers closed on the paper viciously, and she said to herself :

" I'll not go. I'll never go to them again."

She told Sonia about the dinner. Then she dressed and went out.

It was a warm and languid day. She took a carriage and told the coachman to drive to Stamboul—to drive on till she gave him the direction where to go in Stamboul. She had no special object in view. But she longed to be out in the air, to drive, to see people about her, the waterway, the forest of shipping, the domes and the minarets, the cypresses, the glades stretching towards Seraglio Point, the long, low hills of Asia. She longed, too, to hear voices, hurrying feet, the innumerable sounds of life. She hoped by seeing and hearing to fortify her will. The spirit of adventure was the spirit that held her, was the most vital thing within her, and such a spirit needed freedom to breathe in. She was fettered. She had been a coward, or almost a coward, false, perhaps, to her fortunate star. Hitherto she had always followed Nietzsche's advice and had lived perilously. Was she now to be governed by fear ? Even to keep Jimmy's respect and affection could she endure such dominion ? As the sun touched her with his fingers of gold, and the air, full of a strangely languid vitality, whispered about her, as she heard the cries from the sea, and saw human beings, vividly egoistic, going by on their pilgrimage, she said to herself, " Not even for Jimmy ! " The clamorous city, with its fierce openness and its sinister suggestions of hidden things, woke up in her the huntress, and, for the moment, lulled the mother to sleep.

" Not even for Jimmy ! " she thought. " I must be myself. I cannot be otherwise. I must live perilously. To live in any other way for me would be death."

And the line in " The Kasîdah " which Dion had pondered

over came to her, and she thought of the "death that walks in form of life."

As the carriage went upon the bridge she looked across to Stamboul, and was faced by the Mosque of the Valideh. So familiar to her was the sight of its façade, of its cupolas and minarets, that she seldom now even thought of it when she crossed the bridge; but to-day, perhaps because she was unusually strung up, was restive and almost horribly alert, she gazed at it and was intensely conscious of it. She had once said to Dion that Stamboul was the City of the Unknown God, and now suddenly she felt that she was nearing His altars. A strange, perverse desire to pray came to her; to go up into one of the mosques of this mysterious city which she loved, and to pray for her release from Dion Leith.

She smiled faintly as this idea came into her mind. The Unknown God had surely made her as she was, had made her a huntress. Well, then, surely she had the right to pray to Him to give her a free course for her temperament.

"Santa Sophia!" she called to the coachman.

He cracked his whip and drove furiously on to Stamboul. In less than a quarter of an hour he pulled up his horses before the vast Church of Santa Sophia.

Mrs. Clarke sat still in the carriage for a moment looking up at the ugly towering walls, covered with red and white stripes. Her face was haggard in the sunshine, and her pale lips were set together in a hard line. A beggar with twisted stumps instead of arms whined a petition to her, but she neither saw him nor heard him. As she stared at the walls on which the sun blazed she was wondering about her future. The love of life was desperately strong within her that day. The longing for new experiences tormented her physically. She felt as if she could not wait, could not be patient any more. If Dion to-night refused again to give her her freedom she must do something desperate. She must get away secretly and hide herself from him, take a boat to Greece or Rumania, or slip into the Orient express and vanish over the tracks of Europe.

But first she must go into the church and pray to the Unknown God.

She got out of the carriage. The beggar thrust one of his diseased stumps in front of her face. She turned on him with a malignant look, and the whining petition died on his lips. Then she made her way to the Porta Basilica and passed into the church. But as its great spaces opened out

before her a thought, childishly superstitious, came to her, and she turned abruptly, went out, made her way to the beggar who had worried her, gave him a coin and said something kind to him. His almost soprano voice, raised in clamorous benediction, followed her as she returned to the church, moving slowly with horrible loose slippers protecting its floor from her Christian feet. She always laughed in her mind when she wore those slippers and thought of what she was. This sanctuary of the Unknown God must, it seemed, be protected from her because she was a Christian !

There were a good many people in the church, but it looked almost empty because of its immense size. She knew it very well, better perhaps than she knew any other sacred building, and she cared for it very much. She was fond of mosques, delighting in their airy simplicity, in their casual holiness which seemed to say to her, " Worship in me if you will. If you will not, never mind ; dream in me with open eyes, or, if you prefer it, go to sleep in a corner of me. When you wake you can mutter a prayer, or not, just as you please."

Santa Sophia did not, perhaps, say that, though it had now for long years been in use as a mosque, and always seemed to Mrs. Clarke more like a mosque than like a church. It was richly adorned, and something of Christianity still lingered within it. In it there seemed, even to Mrs. Clarke, to be something impelling which asked of each one who entered it more than mere dreams, more than those long meditations which are like prayers of the mind separated from the prayers of the heart and soul. But it possessed the air of freedom which is characteristic of mosques, did not seize those who entered it in a clutch of tenacious sanctity ; but seemed to let them alone, and to influence them by just being wonderful, beautiful, unself-consciously sacred.

At first Mrs. Clarke wandered slowly about the church, without any purpose other than that of gathering to herself some of its atmosphere. During the last few days she had been feeling really tormented. Dion had once said she looked punished. Now he had made her feel punished. And she sought a moment of peace. It could not come to her from mysticism, but it might come to her from great art, which suggests to its votaries mystery, the something beyond, untroubled and shiningly serene.

Presently Mrs. Clarke felt the peace of Santa Sophia, and she felt it in a new way, because she had recently suffered, indeed was suffering still in a new way ; she felt it as some-

thing desirable, which might be of value to her, if she were able to take it to herself and to fold it about her own life. Had she made a mistake in living perilously through many years? Her mind went to the woman who had abandoned Dion and entered a Sisterhood to lead a religious life. She seldom thought about Rosamund except in relation to Dion. She had scarcely known her, and since her first few interviews with Dion in this land of the cypress he had seldom mentioned his wife. She neither liked, nor actively disliked, Rosamund, whose tacit rejection of her acquaintance had not stirred in her any womanly hatred; for though she was a ruthless woman she was not venomous towards other women. She did not bother about them enough for that. But now she considered that other woman with whom she had shared Dion Leith, or rather who, not knowing it doubtless, had shared Dion Leith with her. And she wondered whether Rosamund, in her Sisterhood, was happier than she was in the world. In the Sisterhood there must surely be peace —monotony, drudgery, perhaps, but peace.

Santa Sophia, with its vast spaces, its airy dome, its great arches and galleries, its walls of variegated marble, its glittering mosaics and columns of porphyry, to-day made her realize that in her life of adventure and passion she was driven, as if by a demon with a whip, and that her horrible situation with Dion was but the culmination of a series of horrible situations. She had escaped from them only after devastating battles, in which she had had to use all her nervous energy and all her force of will. Was it worth while? Was the game she was always playing worth the candles she was always burning? Would it not be wiser to seek peace and ensue it? As she drove to Santa Sophia she had longed fiercely to be free so that she might begin again; might again have adventures, might again explore the depths of human personalities, and satisfy her abnormal curiosities and desires. Now she was full of unusual hesitation. Suppose she did succeed in getting rid of Dion by going to England, suppose her prayer—she had not offered it up yet, but she was going to offer it up in a moment—to the Unknown God received a favourable answer, might it not be well for her future happiness if she retired from the passionate life, with its perpetual secrecies, and intrigues, and lies, and violent efforts, into the life of the ideal mother, solely devoted to her only child?

She felt that the struggle with Dion, the horrible scenes

she had had with him, the force of her hatred of him and his hatred of her, the necessity of yielding to him in hatred that which should never be given save with desire, had tried her as nothing else had ever tried her. She felt that her vitality was low, and she supposed that out of that lowered vitality had come her uncharacteristic desire for peace. She had almost envied for a moment the woman whom she had replaced in the life of Dion. Even now—she sighed; a great weariness possessed her. Was she going to be subject to a weakness which she had always despised, the weakness of regret?

She paused beside a column not very far from the raised tribune on the left of the dome which is set apart for the use of the Sultan, and is called the Sultan's seat. Her large eyes stared at it, but at first she did not see it. She was looking inward upon herself. Then, in some distant part of the mosque, a boy's voice began to sing, loudly, almost fiercely. It sounded fanatical and defiant, but tremendously believing, proud in the faith which it proclaimed to faithful and unfaithful alike. It echoed about the mosque, raising a clamour which nobody seemed to heed; for the few ulemas who were visible continued reading the Koran aloud on the low railed-in platforms which they frequent; a Dervish in a pointed hat slept peacefully on, stretched out in a corner; before the prayer carpet of the Prophet, not far from the Mihrab, a half-naked Bedouin, with a sheepskin slung over his bronzed shoulders, preserved his wild attitude of savage adoration; and here and there, in the distance, under the low hanging myriads of lamps, the figures of Turkish soldiers, of street children, of travellers, moved noiselessly to and fro.

The voice of this boy, heedless and very powerful, indeed almost impudent, stirred Mrs. Clarke. It brought her back to her worship of force. One must worship something, and she chose force—force of will, of temperament, of body, of brain. Now she saw the Sultan's tribune, and it made her think of an opera box and of the worldly life. The boy sang on, catching at her mind, pulling her towards the East. The curious peace of any religious life was certainly not for her, yet to-day she felt weary of the life in her world. And she wished she could have in her existence peace of some kind; she wished that she were not a perpetual wanderer. She remembered some of those with whom, from time to time, she had linked herself—her husband, Hadi Bey, Dumeny, Brayfield, Dion Leith. Now she was struggling, and so far in

vain, to thrust Dion out of her life. If she succeeded—what then? Where was stability in her existence? Her love for Jimmy was the only thing that lasted, and that often made her afraid now. She was seized by an almost sentimental desire to lose herself in a love for a man that would last as her love for Jimmy lasted, to know the peace of an enduring and satisfied desire.

The voice of the boy died away. She turned in the direction of the Mihrab to offer up her prayer to the Unknown God, as the pious Mussulman turns in the direction of the Sacred City when he puts up his prayer to Allah.

Her eyes fell upon the Bedouin.

As she looked at him, this man of the desert come up into the City, with the fires of the dunes in his veins, the vast spaces mirrored in his eyes, the passion for wandering in his soul, she felt that in a mysterious and remote way she was akin to him, despite all her culture, her subtle mentality, the difference of her life from his. For she had her wildness of nature, dominant and unceasing, as he had his. He was for ever travelling in body and she in mind. He sought fresh, and ever fresh, camping-places, and so did she. The black ashes of burnt-out fires marked his progress and hers. She looked at him as she uttered her prayer to the Unknown God.

And she prayed for a master, that she might meet a man who would be able to dominate her, to hold her fast in the grip of his nature. At this moment Dion dominated her in an ugly way, and she knew it too well. But she needed some one whom she would willingly obey, whom she would lust to obey, because of love. The restlessness in her life had been caused by a lack; she had never yet found the man who could be not her tyrant for a time, but her master while she lived. Now she prayed for that, the only peace that she really wanted.

While she prayed she was conscious always of the attitude of the Bedouin, which suggested the fierce yielding of one who could never be afraid of the God he worshipped. Nor could she be afraid. For she was not ashamed of what she was, though she hid what she was from motives of worldly prudence and for the sake of her motherhood. She believed that she was born into the world not in order to be severely educated, but in order that she might live to the uttermost, according to the dictates of her temperament. Now at last she knew what that temperament needed, what it had been

seeking, why it had never been able to cease from its journeying. Santa Sophia had told her.

Her knowledge roused in her a sort of fury of longing for release from Dion Leith. She saw the Bedouin riding across the sands in the freedom he had captured, and she ached to be free that she might seek her master. Somewhere there must be the one man who had the power to fasten the yoke on her neck.

"Let me find him!" she prayed, almost angrily, and using her will.

She had forgotten Jimmy. Her whole nature was concentrated in the desire for immediate release from Dion Leith in order that she might be free to pursue consciously the search which till this moment she had pursued unconsciously.

The Bedouin did not move. His black, bird-like eyes were wide open, but he seemed plunged in a dream as he gazed at the Sacred Carpet. He was absolutely unaware of his surroundings and of Mrs. Clarke's consideration of him. There was something animal and something royal in his appearance and in his supreme unconsciousness of others. He looked as if he were a law unto himself, even while he was adoring. How different he was from Dion Leith.

She shut her eyes as she prayed that Dion might be removed from her life, somehow, anyhow, by death if need be. In the dark she created for herself she saw the minarets pointing to the sky as she and Dion had seen them together from the hill of Eyub as they sat under the giant cypress. Then she had wanted Dion; now she prayed:

"Take him away! Let me be free from him! Let me never see him again!"

And she felt as if the Unknown God were listening to her somewhere far off, knew all that was in her mind.

A stealthy movement quite near to her made her open her eyes. The Bedouin had risen to his feet and was approaching her, moving with a lithe step over the matting on his way out of the church. As he passed Mrs. Clarke he enveloped her for a moment in an indifferent glance of fire. He burnt her with his animal disdain of her observation of him, a disdain which seemed to her impregnated with flame. She felt the sands as he passed. When he was gone a sensation of loneliness, even of desolation, oppressed her.

She hesitated for a moment; then she turned and followed him slowly. He went before her, wrapped in his supreme indifference, through the Porta Basilica, and came out into

the blaze of the sunshine. As she emerged, she saw him standing quite still. He seemed—she was just behind him—to be staring at a very fair woman who, accompanied by a guide, was coming towards the church. Mrs. Clarke, intent on the Bedouin, was aware of this woman's approach, but felt no sort of interest in her until she was quite close; then something, some dagger-thrust of the mind, coming from the woman, pierced Mrs. Clarke's indifference.

She looked up and met the sad, pure eyes of Rosamund Leith.

For a moment she stood perfectly still gazing into those eyes. Rosamund had stopped, but she made no gesture of recognition and did not open her lips. She only looked at Mrs. Clarke, and as she looked a deep flush slowly spread over her face and down to her throat.

The Greek guide said something to her; she moved, lowered her eyes and went on into the church without looking back.

The Bedouin strode slowly away into the blaze of the sunshine.

Mrs. Clarke remained where she was, motionless. For the first time perhaps in her life she was utterly amazed by an event. Rosamund Leith here in Constantinople! What did that mean?

Mrs. Clarke knew the arrival of Rosamund meant something that might be tremendously important to herself. As she stood there before the church she was groping to find this something; but her mental faculties seemed to be paralysed, and she could not find it. Rosamund Leith's eyes had told Mrs. Clarke something, that Rosamund knew of Dion's unfaithfulness and who the woman was. What did the fact of Rosamund's coming to Constantinople in possession of that knowledge mean?

From the minaret above her head the *muezzin* in a piercing and nasal voice began the call to prayer. His cry seemed to tear its way through Mrs. Clarke's mental inertia. Abruptly she was in full possession of her faculties. That Eastern man up there, nearer to the blue than she was, cried, "Come to prayer!" But she had already uttered her prayer, and surely Rosamund Leith was the answer.

As she drove away towards the Golden Horn she passed the Bedouin striding along in the sun.

She looked at him, but he took no notice of her; the indifference of the desert was about him.

## CHAPTER XIV

MRS. CLARKE was in her bedroom with the door open that evening when she heard a bell sound in the flat. She had fixed eight for the dinner hour. It was now only half-past six. Nevertheless she felt sure that it was Dion who had just rung. She went swiftly across the room and shut the bedroom door. Two or three minutes later Sonia came in.

"Mr. Leith has come already, Madame," she said, looking straight at her mistress.

"I expected him early, Sonia. You can tell him I will come almost directly."

"Yes, Madame."

"Sonia, wait a minute! How am I looking this evening?"

"How?" said Sonia, with rather heavy emphasis.

"Yes. I feel—I feel as if I were looking unlike my usual self."

Sonia stared hard at Mrs. Clarke. Then she said:

"So you are, Madame."

"In what way?"

"You look almost excited and younger than usual."

"Younger!"

"Yes, as if you were expecting something, almost as a girl expects. I never saw you just like this before."

Mrs. Clarke looked at herself in a mirror earnestly, and for a long time.

"That's all, Sonia," she said, turning round. "You can tell Mr. Leith."

Sonia went out.

Mrs. Clarke followed her ten minutes later. When she came into the little hall she saw lying on a table beside Dion's hat several letters. She stopped by the table and looked down at them. They lay there in a pile held together by an elastic band, and she could only see the writing on the envelope which was at the top. It was addressed to Dion and had been through the post. She wondered whether among those letters there was one from Rosamund. Had she written to the husband whom she had cast out to tell him of the great change which had led her to give up the religious life, to come out to the land of the cypress?

Mrs. Clarke glanced round; then she bent down noiselessly, picked up the packet, slipped off the elastic band and examined the letters one by one. She had never chanced to see Rosamund's handwriting, but she felt sure she would know at once if she held in her hand the letter which might mean her own release. She did not find it; but on two envelopes she saw Beatrice's delicate handwriting, which she knew very well. She longed to know what Beatrice had written. With a sigh she slipped the elastic band back into its place, put the packet down and went into the drawing-room.

Directly she saw Dion she was certain that he knew nothing of the change in Rosamund's life. There was no excitement in his thin and wrinkled brown face; no expectation lit up his sunken eyes making them youthful. He looked hard, wretched and strangely old, but ruthless and forceful in a kind of shattered and ravaged way. She thought of a ruined house with a cold strong light in the window. He was sitting when she came in, leaning forward, with his hands hanging down between his knees. When he saw her he got up slowly.

"I was near here and had nothing to do, so I came early," he said, not apologetically, but carelessly.

He looked at her and added:

"What's happened to you to-day?"

"Nothing. What an extraordinary question!"

"Is it? You look different. There's a change."

A suspicious expression made his face ugly.

"Have you met anyone?"

"Of course. How can one go out in Constantinople without meeting people?"

"Anyone new, I meant."

"No."

"You look just as if you had."

"Do I?" she said, with indifference.

"Yes. You look—I don't know——"

He paused.

"I think it's younger," he added. "You never are tired or ill, but you generally look both. To-day you don't."

"Please don't blame me for looking moderately well for once in my life."

"Why did you ask me to dinner here?"

The sound of his voice was as suspicious as the expression on his face.

"Oh, I don't know. Once in a way it doesn't matter. And all the servants have gone away to Buyukdereh."

"Then you are going there?"

"I'm not sure if I shall be able to stay there for more than a few days if I do go."

"Why not?" he said sharply.

"It's just possible I may have to go over to England on business. Something's gone wrong with my money matters, not the money my husband allows me, but my own money. I had a letter from my lawyer."

"When?"

"To-day."

He stood before her in silence.

"By the way," she added, "I saw all those letters for you on the hall table. Why don't you read them?"

"Going to England, are you?" he said, frowning.

"I may have to."

"Surely you must know from your lawyer's letter whether it will be necessary or not."

"I expect it will be necessary."

He turned slowly away from her and went to the window where he stood for a moment, apparently looking out. She sat down on the sofa and glanced at the clock. How were they to get through a long evening together? She wished she could bring about a crisis in their relations abruptly. Dion turned round. He had his hands in his pockets.

"I wish you'd let me look at that lawyer's letter," he said.

"It wouldn't interest you."

"If it's about money matters I might be able to help you. You know they used to be my job. Even now anything to do with investments——"

"Oh, I won't bother you," she said coolly. "I always do business through some one I can pay."

"Well, you can pay me."

"No, I can't."

"But I say you can."

"How?" she said.

And instantly she regretted having asked the question.

He looked at her in silence for a minute, then he said:

"By sticking always to me, by proving yourself loyal."

Her mouth twitched. The intense irony in the last word made her feel inclined to laugh hysterically.

" But you don't always behave in such a way as to make me feel loyal," she said, controlling herself.

" I'm going to try to be more clever with you in the future."

She got up abruptly.

" I didn't expect you quite so early, and I've got a letter to write to Jimmy——"

" And a letter to your lawyer ! " he interrupted.

" No, that can wait till to-morrow. I must think things over. But I must write to Jimmy now."

" Give him a kind message from me."

" What will you do while I'm writing ? "

" I'll sit here."

" But do something ! Why not read your letters ? "

" Yes, I may as well look at them. There was quite a collection waiting for me at the British Post Office. I haven't been there for months."

" Why don't you go more regularly ? "

" Because I've done with the past ! " he exclaimed, with sudden savagery. " And letters from home only rake it up."

She looked at him narrowly.

" But have we ever done with the past ? " she said, with her eyes upon him. " If we think so isn't that a stupidity on our part ? "

" You're talking like a parson ! "

" Even a parson may hit upon a truth now and then."

" It depends upon oneself. I say I have done with the past."

" And yet you're afraid to read letters from England."

" I'm not."

" And you never go to England."

" There's nothing to prevent me from going to England."

" Except your own feelings about things."

" One gets over feelings with the help of Time. I'm not such a sensitive fool as I used to be. Life has knocked all that sort of rot out of me."

She sat down at the writing-table from which Jimmy's photograph had vanished.

" Read your letters, or read a book," she said.

And she picked up a pen.

She did not look at him again, and she tried hard to detach her mind from him. She took a sheet of writing-paper and began to write to Jimmy, but she was painfully aware of Dion's presence in the room, of every slightest movement

that he made. She heard him sit down and move something on a table, then sigh; complete silence followed. She felt as if her whole body were flushing with irritation. Why didn't he get his letters? She was positive Beatrice had written to tell him that Rosamund had left the Sisterhood, and she was longing to know what effect that news would have upon him.

Presently he moved again and got up, and she heard him go over to the window. She strove, with a bitter effort, to concentrate her thoughts on Jimmy, but now the Bedouin came between her and the paper; she saw him striding indifferently through the blaze of the sunshine.

"About the summer holidays this year—I am not quite sure yet what my plans will be——" she wrote slowly.

Dion was moving again. He came away from the window, crossed the room behind her, and opened the door. He was going to fetch his letters. She wrote hurriedly on. He went out into the little hall and returned.

"I'm going to have a look at my letters," he said, behind her.

She glanced round.

"What did you say? Oh—your letters."

"They look pretty old," he said, turning them over.

She saw Beatrice's handwriting.

"Here's one from Beatrice Daventry," he added, in a hard voice.

"Does she often write to you?"

"She hasn't written for a long time."

He thrust a finger under the envelope. Mrs. Clarke turned and again bent over her letter to Jimmy.

. . . . . .

"Dinner is ready, Madame!"

Mrs. Clarke looked up from the writing-table at Sonia standing squarely in the doorway, then at the clock.

"Dinner! But it's only a quarter-past seven."

"I thought you ordered it for a quarter-past seven, Madame," replied Sonia, with quiet firmness.

"Oh, did I? I'd forgotten."

She pushed away the writing-paper and got up.

"D'you mind dining so early?" she asked Dion, looking at him for the first time since he had read his letters.

"No," he replied, in a voice which had no colour at all. His face was set like a mask.

"Do you want to wash your hands? If so, Sonia will bring you some hot water to the spare room."

"Thanks, I'll go; but I prefer cold water."

He went out of the room carrying the opened letters with him. After a moment Sonia came back.

"I hope I didn't do wrong about dinner, Madame," she said. "I thought as Monsieur Leith came so early Madame would wish dinner earlier."

Mrs. Clarke put her hand on her servant's substantial arm.

"You always understand things, Sonia," she said. "I'm tired. I mean to go to bed very early to-night."

"But will he——"

She raised her heavy eyebrows.

"I must rest to-night," said Mrs. Clarke. "I must, I must."

"Let me tell him, then, if he——"

"No, no."

Mrs. Clarke put one hand to her lips. She heard Dion in the hall. When he came in she saw at once that he had been dashing cold water on his face. His eyes fell before hers. She could not divine what he had found in his letters or what was passing in his mind.

"Come to dinner," she said.

And they went at once to the dining-room.

During the meal they talked because Mrs. Clarke exerted herself. She was helped, perhaps, by her concealed excitement. She had never before felt so excited, so almost feverishly alert in body and mind as she felt that night, except at the climax of her divorce case. And she was waiting now for condemnation or acquittal as she had waited then. It was horrible. She was painfully conscious of a desperate strength in Dion. It was as if he had grown abruptly, and she had as abruptly diminished. His savage assertion about the past had impressed her disagreeably. It might be true. He might really have succeeded in slaying his love for his wife. If so, what chance had the woman who had taken him of regaining her freedom of action? She was afraid to play her last card.

When dinner was over Dion said:

"Shall we be off?"

She did not ask where they were going; she had no need to ask. After a moment's hesitation she said:

"Not just yet. Come into the drawing-room. You can smoke, and if you like I'll play you something."

"All right."

They went into the drawing-room. It was dimly lighted. Blinds and curtains were drawn. Dion sank down heavily in a chair.

"The cigarettes are there!"

"Yes, I see. Thanks."

A strange preoccupation seemed to be descending upon him and to be covering him up. Sonia came in with coffee. Dion put his cup, full, down beside him on a table. He did not sip the coffee, nor did he light a cigarette. While Mrs. Clarke was drinking her coffee he sat without uttering a word.

She went to the piano. She played really well. Otherwise she would not have played to him, or to anyone. She was specially at home in the music of Chopin, and had studied minutely many of the "Études." Now she began to play the Étude in E flat. As she played she felt that the intense nervous irritation which had possessed her was diminishing slightly, was becoming more bearable. She played several of the Études, and presently began the one in Thirds and Sixths which she had once found abominably difficult. She remembered what a struggle she had had with it before she had conquered it. She had been quite a girl then, but already she had been a worshipper of will-power, and had resolved to cultivate and to increase her own will. And she had used this Étude as a means of testing herself. Over and over again, when she had almost despaired of ever overcoming its difficulties, she had said to herself, "Vouloir c'est pouvoir"; and at last she had succeeded in playing the excessively difficult music as if it were quite easy to her. That had been the first stepping upward towards power.

She remembered that now and she set her teeth. "Vouloir c'est pouvoir." She had proved the saying true again and again; she must prove it true to-night. She willed her release; she would somehow obtain it.

Directly she had finished the Étude she got up from the piano.

"You play that wonderfully well," Dion said, with a sort of hard recognition of her merit, but with no enthusiasm. "Do you know that there's something damnably competent in you?"

She stood looking down on him.

"I'm very glad there is. I don't care to bungle what I undertake."

"I believe I knew that the first time I saw you, standing

by Echo. You held my hand that day. Do you remember?"

He laughed faintly.

"No, I don't remember."

"The hand of Stamboul was upon me then. By God, we are under the yoke. It was fated then that you should destroy me."

"Destroy you?"

"Yes. What's the good of lies between us? You've destroyed me. That's why you want to get rid of me. Your instinct tells you the work is done, and you're right. But you must stick to the wreckage. After all, it's your wreckage."

"No. A man can only destroy himself," she said, with cold defiance.

"Don't let's argue about it. The thing's done—done!"

In his voice there was a sound of almost wild despair, but his face preserved its hard, mask-like look.

"And there's no returning from destruction," he added. "Those who try to fancy there is are just fools."

He looked up at her as she stood before him, and seemed suddenly struck by the expression on her face.

"Who's to be the one to destroy you?" he said. "D'you think the Unknown God has singled me out for the job? Or do you really expect to escape scot-free after making the sign of the cross over so many lost souls?"

"The sign of the cross?"

"Yes. Don't you remember when I told you of Brayfield's death? You've never given him a thought since, I suppose. But I'll make you keep on thinking about me."

"What has happened to-night?" she asked sharply.

"Happened?"

"To make you talk like this?"

"Nothing has happened."

"That's not true. Since you came into the house you've quite changed."

"Merely because I've been reckoning things up, taking stock of the amount of damage that's been done. It'll have to be paid for, I suppose. Everything's paid for in the end, isn't it? When are you going to England?"

"I didn't say it was absolutely decided."

"No; but it is. I want to know the date, so that I may pack up to accompany you. It will be jolly to see Jimmy again. I shall run down to Eton and take him out."

"I am not going to allow you to do me any harm. Because lately I've given in to you sometimes, you mustn't think you can make a slave of me."

"And you mustn't think you'll get rid of me in one way if you can't in another. This English project is nothing but an attempt to give me the slip. You thought I couldn't face England, so you chose England as the place you would travel to. You've never had a letter from your lawyer, and there's no reason why you should go to England on business. But I can face England. I've never done anything *there* that I'm ashamed of. My record there is a clean one."

Suddenly he thrust his hand into his jacket and pulled out the letters he had brought from the British Post Office.

"And apart from that, you made a mistake in reckoning on my sensitiveness."

"Honestly, I don't know what you mean by that," she said, with frigid calm.

"Yes, you do. You thought I wouldn't follow you to England because I should shrink from facing my mother, perhaps, and my wife's relatives, and all the people who know what I've done. I don't shrink from meeting anyone, and I'll prove it to you."

He pulled a letter out of its envelope.

"This is from Beatrice Daventry. In it she tells me a piece of news." (He glanced quickly over the sheets.) "My wife has got tired of leading a religious life and has left the Sisterhood in which she was, and gone to live in London. Here it is: 'Rosamund is living once more in Great Cumberland Place with my guardian. She never goes into society, but otherwise she is leading an ordinary life. I am quite sure she will never go back to Liverpool.'—So, if I go to London I may run across my wife any day. Why not?"

"Your wife has left the Sisterhood!" said Mrs. Clarke slowly, forcing a sound of surprise into her husky voice.

"I've just told you so. You and I may meet her in London. If we do, I should think she'll be hard put to it to recognize me. Now put on your things and we'll be off."

"I shall not go out to-night. I intend——"

She paused.

"What do you intend?"

"I don't mean ever to go to those rooms again."

"Indeed. Why not?" he asked, with cold irony.

"I loathe them."

"You found them. You chose the furniture for them. Your perfect taste made them what they are."

"I tell you I loathe them!" she repeated violently.

"We'll change them, then. We can easily find some others that will do just as well."

"Don't you understand that I loathe them because I meet you in them?"

"I understood that a good while ago."

"And yet you——"

"My dear!" he interrupted her. "Didn't I tell you you had destroyed me? The man I was might have bothered about trifles of that kind, the man I am simply doesn't recognize them. Jimmy hates me too, but I haven't done with Jimmy yet, nevertheless."

"You shall never meet Jimmy again. I shall prevent it."

"How can you?"

"You're not fit to be with him."

"But you have moulded me into what I am. He must get accustomed to his own mother's handiwork."

"Jimmy can't bear you. He told me so when he was last here. He detests you."

"Ah!" said Dion, with sudden savagery, springing up from his chair. "So you and he have talked me over! I was sure of it. And no doubt you told Jimmy he was right in hating me."

"I never discussed the matter with him at all. I couldn't prevent his telling me what he felt about you."

Dion had become very pale. He stood for a moment without speaking, clenching his hands and looking at her with blazing eyes. For a moment she thought that perhaps he was going to strike her. He seemed to be struggling desperately with himself, to be striving to conquer something within him. At last he turned away from her. She heard him twice mutter the name of her boy, "Jimmy! Jimmy!" Then he went away from her to the far end of the room, where the piano was, and stood by it. She saw his broad shoulders heaving. He held on to the edge of the piano with both hands, leaning forward. She stayed where she was, staring at him. She realized that to-night he might be dangerous to her. She had set out to defy him. But she was not sure now whether, perhaps, gentleness and an air of great sincerity might not be the only effective weapons against him in his present abnormal condition. Possibly even now it was not

too late to use them. She crossed the room and came to him swiftly.

"Dion!" she said.

He did not move.

"Dion!" she repeated, putting her hand on his shoulder.

He turned round. His pale face was distorted. She scarcely recognized him.

"Dion, let us look things in the face."

"Oh, God—that is what I'm doing," he said.

His lips twisted, his face was convulsed. She looked at him in silence, wondering what was going to happen. For a moment she was almost physically afraid. Something in him to-night struck hard upon her imagination and she felt as if it were trembling.

"Come and sit down," he said, at last.

And she saw that for the moment he had succeeded in regaining self-control.

"Very well."

She went to sit down; he sat opposite to her.

"You hate me, don't you?" he said.

She hesitated.

"Don't you?" he repeated.

"We needn't use ugly words," she said at last.

"For ugly things? I believe it's best. You hate me and I hate you. D'you know why I hate you? Not because you deliberately made me care for you with my body, in the beastly, wholly physical way, but because you wouldn't let the other thing alone."

"The other thing?"

"Haven't we got something else as well as the body? Look here—before I ever knew you I was always trying to build. At first I tried to build for a possible future which might never come. Well, it did come, and I was glad I'd stuck to my building—sometimes when it was difficult. Then I tried to build for—for my wife—and then my child came and I tried to build for him, too. So it went on. I was always building, or trying to. In South Africa I was doing it, and I came back feeling as if I'd got something to show, not much, but something, for my work. Then the crash came, and I thought I knew sorrow and horror down to the bones. But I didn't. I've only got to know them to the bones here. You've made me know them. If you'd loved me I should never have complained, have attacked you, been brutal to you; but when I think that you've never cared a rap about me,

never cared for anything but my body, and that—that——" his voice broke for a moment ; then he recovered himself and went on, more harshly,—" and that merely from desire, or whatever you choose to call it, you've sent the last stones of my building to dust, I sometimes feel as if I could murder you. If you meant to kick me out and be free of me when you had had enough of me, you should never have brought Jimmy into the matter ; for in a way you could never understand Jimmy was linked up with my boy, with Robin. When you made me earn Jimmy's hatred by being utterly false to all I really was, you separated me from my boy. I killed him, but till then I was sometimes near him. Ever since that night of lying and dirty pretence he's—he's—I've lost him. You've taken my boy from me. Why should I leave you yours ? "

" But you're mad—when my boy's alive and——"

" And so's mine ! "

She stared at him in silence.

" You can't give him back to me. Jimmy shrinks from me not because of what I've done, but because of what I've become, and my boy feels as Jimmy does. He—he——"

Mrs. Clarke pushed back her chair brusquely. She was now feeling really afraid. She longed to call in Sonia. She wished the other servants were in the flat instead of at Buyukdereh.

" Your boy's dead," she said, dully, obstinately. " Jimmy has nothing to do with him—never had anything to do with him. And as for me, I have never interfered between you and your child."

She got up. So did he.

" Never, never ! " she repeated. " But your mind is warped and you don't know what you're saying."

" I do. But we won't argue about it. You're a materialist and you can't understand the real things."

His own words seemed suddenly to strike upon him like a great blow.

" The real things ! " he exclaimed. " I've lost them all for ever. But I'll keep what I've got. I'll keep what I've got. You hate me and I hate you, but we belong to each other and we'll stick together, and Jimmy must make up his mind to it. Once you said that if he was twenty-one you'd tell him all about it. If you're going to England I'll go there too, and we can enlighten Jimmy a little sooner. Now let us be off to the rooms. As you've taken a dislike to them we'll give

them up. But we must pay a last visit to them, a visit of good-bye."

She shuddered. The thought of being shut up alone with him horrified her imagination. She waited a moment; then she said:

"Very well. I'll go and put on my things."

And she went out of the room. She wanted to gain time, to be quite alone for a moment.

When she was in her bedroom she did not summon Sonia, who was in the kitchen washing up. Slowly she went to get out a wrap and a hat. Standing before the glass she adjusted the hat on her head carefully, adroitly; then she drew the wrap round her shoulders and picked up a pair of long gloves. After an instant of hesitation she began to pull them on. The process took several minutes. She was careful to smooth out every wrinkle. While she did so she was thinking of Rosamund Leith.

All through the evening she had been on the verge of telling Dion that his wife was in Constantinople, but something had held her back. And even now she could not make up her mind whether to tell him or not. She was afraid to risk the revelation because she did not know at all how he would take it. When he knew she might be free. There was the possibility of that. He must realize, he would surely be obliged to realize, that his wife could have but one purpose in deliberately travelling out to the place where he was living. She must be seeking a reconciliation, in spite of the knowledge which Mrs. Clarke had read in her eyes that day. But would Dion face those eyes with the hard defiance of one irreparably aloof from his former life? If he were really ready and determined to show himself in London as the lover of another woman would he not be ready to do the same thing here in Constantinople?

To tell him seemed to Mrs. Clarke the one chance of escape for her now, but she was afraid to tell him because she was afraid to know that what seemed the only possible avenue to freedom was barred against her. She had said to herself at the piano "Vouloir c'est pouvoir," and she had determined to be free, but again Dion's will of a desperate man had towered up over hers. It was the fact that he was desperate which gave to him his power.

At last the gloves lay absolutely smooth on her hands and arms, and she went back to the drawing-room. Till she opened the door of it she did not know what she was going to do.

"So you're dressed!" Dion said as she came in. "That's right. Let's be off."

"What is the good of going? You have said we hate each other. How can this sort of thing go on in hatred? Dion, let us give it all up."

"Why have you put on your things?"

"I don't know. Let us say good-bye to-night, and not in anger. We were not suited to be together for long. We are too different."

"How many men have you said all this to already? Come along!"

He took her firmly by the wrist.

"Wait, Dion!"

"Why should we wait?"

"There's something I must tell you before we go."

He kept his hand on her wrist.

"Well? What is it?"

"I went to Santa Sophia to-day."

As she spoke the Bedouin came before her again. She saw his bronze-coloured arms and his bird-like eyes.

"Santa Sophia! Did you go to pray?"

She stared at him. His lips were curled in a smile.

"No," she said. "But I like to go there sometimes. As I was coming away I met some one."

"Well?"

"Some one you know—a woman."

"A woman? Lady Ingleton?"

"No; your wife."

The fingers which held her wrist became suddenly cold, but they still pressed firmly upon her flesh.

"That's a lie!" he said hoarsely.

"It isn't!"

"How dare you tell me such a lie?"

He bent and gazed into her eyes.

"Liar! Liar!"

But though his lips made the assertion, his eyes, in agony, seemed to be asking a question. He seized her other wrist.

"What's your object in telling me such a lie? What are you trying to gain by it? Do you think you'll get rid of me for to-night, and that to-morrow, by some trick, you'll escape from me for ever? D'you think that?"

"I met your wife to-day just outside Santa Sophia," she said steadily. "When she saw me she stopped. We looked

at each other for a minute. Neither of us spoke a word. But she told me something."

"Told you . . . ?"

"With her eyes. She knows about you and me."

His hands fell from her wrists. By the look in his eyes she saw that he was beginning to believe her.

"She knows," Mrs. Clarke repeated. "And yet she has come here. What does that mean ?"

"What does that mean ?" he repeated, in a muttering voice.

"Do you believe what I say ?"

After a long look at her he said :

"Yes ; she is here."

A fierce wave of red went over his face. For a moment his eyes shone. Then a look of despair and horror made him frightful, and stirred even in her a sensation of pity.

He began to tremble.

"Don't ! Don't !" she said, putting out her hands and moving away.

"She can't know !" he said, trembling more violently.

"She does know."

"She wouldn't have come. She doesn't know. She doesn't know."

"She does know. Now I'm ready, if you want to go to the rooms."

Dion went white to the lips. He came towards her. His eyes were so menacing that she felt sure he was going to do her some dreadful injury ; but when he was close to her he controlled himself and stood still. For what seemed to her a very long time he stood there, looking at her as a man looks at the heap of his sins when the sword has cloven a way into the depths of his spirit. Then he said :

"You're free."

He went out of the room, leaving the door open. A moment later Mrs. Clarke heard the front door shut, and his footsteps on the stone stairs outside. They died away.

Then she began to sob. She felt shaken and frightened almost like a child. But presently her sobs ceased. She took off her hat and wrap and her gloves, lay down on the sofa, put her hands behind her small head, and, motionless, gazed at the pale grey wall of the room. It seemed to fade away after she had gazed at it for two or three minutes ; a world opened out before her, and she saw a barrier, like a long deep trench, stretching into a far distance. On one side of

this trench stood a boy with densely thick hair and large hands and frank, observant eyes; on the other stood a Bedouin of the desert.

Then she shuddered. Dion had told her she was free. But was she free? Could she ever be free now?

Suddenly she broke into a passion of tears. She was inundated with self-pity. She had prayed to the Unknown God. He had answered her prayer, but, nevertheless, he had surely cursed her. For love and lust were at merciless war within her. She was tormented.

That night she knew she had run up a debt which she would be forced to pay; she knew that her punishment was beginning.

## CHAPTER XV

WHEN Dion came out into the street he stood still on the pavement. It was between ten and eleven o'clock. Stamboul, the mysterious city, was plunged in darkness, but Pera was lit up and astir, was full of blatant and furtive activities. He listened to its voices as he stood under the stars, and presently from them the voice of a woman detached itself, and said clearly and with a sort of beautifully wondering slowness, "I can see the Pleiades."

Tears started into his eyes. He was afraid of that voice and yet his whole being longed desperately to hear it again. The knowledge that Rosamund was here in Constantinople, very near to him—how it had changed the whole city for him! Every light that gleamed, every sound that rose up, seemed to hold for him a terribly vital meaning. And he knew that all the time he had been living in Constantinople it had been to him a horrible city of roaring emptiness, and he knew that now, in a moment, it had become the true centre of the world. He was amazed and he was horrified by the power and intensity of the love within him. In this moment he knew it for an undying thing. Nothing could kill it, no act of Rosamund's, no act of his. Even lust had not suffocated the purity of it, even satiety of the flesh had not lessened the yearning of it, or availed to deprive it of its ardent simplicity, of its ideal character. In it there was still the

child with his wonder, the boy with his stirring aspirations towards life, the man with his full-grown passion. He had sought to kill it and he had not even touched it. He knew that now and was shaken by the knowledge. Where did it dwell then, this thing that governed him and that he could not break ? He longed to get at it, to seize it, hold it to some fierce light, examine it. And then ? Would he wish to cast it away ?

" I can see the Pleiades."

For a moment the peace of Olympia was about him, and he heard the voices of Eternity whispering among the pine trees. Then the irreparable blotted out that green beauty, that message from the beyond ; reality rushed upon him. He turned and looked at the building he had just left. It towered above him, white, bare, with its rows of windows. He knew that he would never go into it again, that he had done for ever with the woman in there who hated him. Yes, he had done with her insomuch as a man can finish with anyone who has been closely, intimately, for good or for evil, in his life. As he watched her windows for a moment his mind reviewed swiftly his connexion with her, from the moment when she had held his hand indifferently, yet with intention, in Mrs. Chetwinde's drawing-room, till the moment, just past, when he had said to her, " You are free." And he knew that from the first moment when she had seen him she had made up her mind that some day he should be her lover. He hated her, and yet he knew now that in some strange and obscure way he almost respected her, for her determination, her unscrupulous courage, her will to live as she chose to live. She at any rate possessed a kind of evil strength. And he——?

Slowly he turned away from that house. He did not know where Rosamund was staying, but he thought she was probably at the Hôtel de Byzance, and he walked almost mechanically towards it. He was burning with excitement, and yet there was within him something cold, capable and relentless, which considered him almost as a judge considers a criminal, which seemed to be probing into the rotten part of his nature, determined to know once and for all just how rotten it was. Rosamund surely was strong in her goodness as Mrs. Clarke was strong in her evil. He had known the cruelty of both those strengths. And why ? Surely because he himself had never been really strong. Intensity of feeling had constantly betrayed him into weakness. And

even now was it not weakness in him, this inability to leave off loving Rosamund after all that had happened? Perhaps the power of feeling intensely was the great betrayer of a man.

He descended the Grande Rue, moving in the midst of a press of humanity, but strongly conscious only of Rosamund's nearness to him, until at last he was in front of the Hôtel de Byzance. He stood on the opposite side of the way, looking at the lighted windows, at the doorway through which people came and went. Was she in there, close to him? Why had she come to Constantinople?

She must have come there because of him. There could not surely be any other reason for her travelling so far to the city where she knew he was living. But then she must have repented of her cruelty after the death of Robin, have thought seriously of resuming her married life. It must be so. Inexorably Dion's reason led him to that conclusion. Having reached it he looked at himself, and again his own weakness confronted him like a spectre which would not leave him, which dogged him relentlessly down all the ways of his life. Prompted, governed by that weakness, which he had actually mistaken madly for strength, for an assertion of his manhood, he had raised up between Rosamund and himself perhaps the only barrier which could never be broken down, the barrier of a great betrayal. What she had most cared for in him he had trampled into the dirt; he had slain the purity which had drawn her to him.

Mrs. Clarke had said that Rosamund knew of their connexion. He believed her. He could not help trusting her horrible capacity to read such a truth in another woman's eyes. It must be so. But Rosamund surely could only have learnt in Constantinople the horrible truth which would for ever divide them. She must have travelled out with the intention of seeing him again, of telling him that she repented of what she had done, and then in the city which had seen his degradation she must have found out what he was.

He saw her outraged, bitterly ashamed of having made the long journey to seek a man who had betrayed her; he saw her wounded in the soul. She had wounded him in the soul, but at this moment he scarcely thought of that. The knowledge that she was near to him seemed to have suddenly renewed the pure springs of his youth. When Cynthia Clarke had said, "Now I'm ready if you want to go to the rooms," she had received her freedom from the Dion

who had won Rosamund, not from the withered and embittered man upon whom she had perversely seized in his misery and desolation.

That Rosamund should travel to him and then know him for what he was! All his intense bitterness against her was swept away by the flood of his hatred of himself.

Suddenly the lights of the city seemed to fade before his eyes and the voices of the city seemed to lose their chattering gaiety. Darkness and horrible mutterings were about him. He heard the last door closing against him. He accounted himself from henceforth among the damned. Lifting his head he stared for a moment at the Hôtel de Byzance. Now he felt sure that she was there. He knew she was there, and he bade her an eternal farewell. Not she—as for so long he had thought—but he had broken their marriage. She had sinned in the soul. But to-night he did not see her sin. He saw only his black sin of the body, the irreparable sin he had committed against her shining purity to which he had been united.

How could he have committed that sin ?

He turned away from the hotel, and went down towards his lodgings in Galata ; he felt, as he walked, like one treading a descent which led down into eternal darkness.

How had he come to do what he had done ?

Already he saw Cynthia Clarke as something far away, an almost meaningless phantom. He wondered why he had felt power in her ; he wondered what it was that had led him to her, had kept him beside her, had bound him to her. She was nothing. She had never really been anything to him. And yet she had ruined his life. He saw her pale and haggard face, her haunted cheeks and temples, the lovely shape of her head with its cloud of unshining hair, her small tenacious hands. He saw her distinctly. But she was far away, utterly remote from him. She had meant nothing to him, and yet she had ruined him. Let her go. Her work was done.

It was near midnight when he went at last to his lodgings, which were in a high house not far from the Tophane landing. From his windows he could see the Golden Horn, and the minarets and domes of Stamboul. His two rooms, though clean, were shabbily furnished and unattractive. He had a Greek servant who came in every day to do what was necessary. He never received any visitors in these rooms, which he had taken when he gave up going into the society of the

diplomats and others to whom he had been introduced at Buyukdereh.

His feet echoed on the dirty staircase as he mounted slowly up till he stood in front of his own door. Slowly, like one making an effort that was almost painful to him, he searched for his key and drew it out. His hand shook as he inserted the key into the keyhole. He tried to steady his hand, but he could not control its furtive and perpetual movement. When the door was open he struck a match, and lit a candle that stood on a chair in the dingy and narrow lobby. Then he turned round wearily to shut the door. He was possessed by a great fatigue, and wondered whether, if he fell on his bed in the blackness, he would be able to sleep. As he turned he saw, lying on the matting at his feet, a square white envelope. It was lying upside down. Some one must have pushed it under the door while he was out.

He stood looking at it for a minute. Then he shut the door, bent down, picked up the envelope, turned it over and held it near to the candle flame. He read his name and the handwriting was Rosamund's.

After a long pause he took the candle and carried the letter into his sitting-room. He set the candle down on the table on which lay "The Kasîdah" and a few other books, laid the letter beside it, with trembling hands drew up a chair and sat down.

Rosamund had written to him. When? Before she had learnt the truth or afterwards?

For a long time he sat there, leaning over the table, staring at the address which her hand had written. And he saw her hand, so different from Mrs. Clarke's, and he remembered its touch upon his, absolutely unlike the touch of any other hand ever felt by him. Something quivered in his flesh. The agony of the body rushed upon him and mingled with the agony of the soul. He bent down, laid his hot forehead against the letter, and shut his eyes.

A clock struck presently. He opened his eyes, lifted his head, took up the envelope, quickly tore it, and unfolded the paper within.

"HÔTEL DE BYZANCE, CONSTANTINOPLE,
*Wednesday evening*

"I am here. I want to see you. Shall I come to you to-morrow? I can come at any time, or I can meet you

at any place you choose. Only tell me the hour and how to go if it is difficult. ROSAMUND"

Wednesday evening! It was now the night of Wednesday. Then Rosamund had written to him after she had been to Santa Sophia and had met Mrs. Clarke. She knew, and yet she wrote to him; she asked to see him; she even offered to come to his rooms. The thing was incomprehensible.

He read the note again. He pored over every word in it almost like a child. Then he held it in his hand, sat back in his chair and wondered.

What did Rosamund mean? Why did she wish to see him? What could she intend to do? His intimate knowledge of what Rosamund was companioned him at this moment—that knowledge which no separation, which no hatred even, could ever destroy. She was fastidiously pure. She could never be anything else. He could not conceive of her ever drawing near to, and associating herself deliberately with, bodily degradation. He thought of her as he had known her, with her relations, her friends, with himself, with Robin. Always in every relation of life a radiant purity had been about her like an atmosphere; always she had walked in rays of the sun. Until Robin had died! And then she had withdrawn into the austere purity of the religious life. He felt it to be absolutely impossible that she should seek him, even seek but one interview with him, if she knew what his life had been during the last few months. And, feeling that, he was now forced to the conclusion that Mrs. Clarke's intuition had gone for once astray. If Rosamund knew she would never have written that note. Again he looked at it, read it. It must have been written in complete ignorance. Mrs. Clarke had made a mistake. Perhaps she had been betrayed into error by her own knowledge of guilt. And yet such a lapse was very uncharacteristic of her. He compared his knowledge of her with his knowledge of Rosamund. It was absolutely impossible that Rosamund had written that letter to him with full understanding of his situation in Constantinople. But she might have heard rumours. She might have resolved to clear them up. Having travelled out with the intention of seeking a reconciliation she might have thought it due to him to accept evil-tidings of him only from his own lips. Always, he knew, she had absolutely trusted in his loyalty and faithfulness to her. Perhaps then, even though she had put him out of her life,

she was unable to believe that he had tried to forget her in unfaithfulness. Perhaps that was the true explanation of her conduct.

Could he then save himself from destruction by a great lie?

He sat pondering that problem, oblivious of time. Could he lie to Rosamund? All his long bitterness against her for the moment was gone, driven out by his self-condemnation. A great love must forgive. It cannot help itself. It carries within it, as a child is carried in the womb, the sweet burden of divinity, and shares in the attributes of God. So it was with Dion on that night as he sat in his dingy room. And presently his soul rejected the lie he had abominably thought of. He knew he could not tell Rosamund a lie. Then what was he to do?

He drew out of a drawer a piece of letter paper, dipped a pen in ink. He had a mind to write the horrible truth which he could surely never speak.

"I have received your letter," he wrote, in a blurred and unsteady handwriting. Then he stopped. He stared at the paper, pushed it away from him, and got up. He could not write the truth. He went to the window and looked out into the dark night. Here and there he saw faint lights. But Stamboul was almost hidden in the gloom, a city rather suggested by its shadow than actually visible. The Golden Horn was a tangled mystery. There were some withdrawn stars.

Should he not reply to Rosamund's letter? If she had heard rumours about his life would not his silence convey to her the fact that they were true? He had perhaps only to do nothing and Rosamund would understand and—would leave Constantinople.

The blackness which shrouded Stamboul suddenly seemed to him to become more solid, impregnable. He felt that his own life would be drowned in blackness if Rosamund went away. And abruptly he knew that he must see her. Whatever the cost, whatever the shame and bitterness, he must see her once. He would tell her, or try to tell her, what he had been through, what he had suffered, why he had done what he had done. Possibly she would be able to understand. If only he could find the words that would give her the inner truth perhaps they might reach her heart. Something intense told him that he must try to make her understand how he had loved her, through all his hideous attempt to slay his

love of her. Could a woman understand such a thing? Desperately he wondered. Might not his terrible sincerity perhaps overwhelm her doubts?

He left the window, sat down again at the table, and wrote quickly.

"I have had your letter. Will you meet me to-morrow at Eyub, in the cemetery on the hill? I will be near the Tekkeh of the dancing Dervishes. I will be there before noon, and will wait all day. DION"

When he began to write he knew that he could not make his confession to Rosamund within the four walls of his sordid and dingy room. Her power to understand would surely be taken from her there. Might it not be released under the sky of morning, within sight of those minarets which he had sometimes feared, but which he had always secretly, in some obscure way, loved even in the most abominable moments of his abominable life, as he had always secretly, beneath all the hard bitterness of his stricken heart, loved Rosamund? From them came the voice which would not be gainsaid, the voice which whispered, "In the East thou shalt find me if thou hast not found me in the West." Might not that voice help him when he spoke to Rosamund, help her to understand him, help her perhaps even to——

But there he stopped. He dared not contemplate the possibility of her being able to accept the man he had become as her companion. And yet now he felt himself somehow closely akin to the former Dion, flesh of that man's flesh, bone of his bone. It was as if his sin fell from him when he so utterly repented of it.

Slowly he put the note he had written into an envelope, sealed it, and wrote the address—"Mrs. Dion Leith, Hôtel de Byzance." He blotted it. Then he fetched his hat and stick. He meant to take the note himself to the Hôtel de Byzance. The night might be made for sleep, but he knew he could not sleep till he had seen Rosamund. When he was out in the air, and was walking uphill towards Pera, he realized that within him, in spite of all, something of hope still lingered. Rosamund's letter to him had wrought already a wonderful change in his tortured life. The knowledge that he would see her again, be with her alone, even if only for an hour, even if only that he might tell her what would alienate her from him for ever, thrilled through him, seemed

even to shed a fierce strength and alertness through his body. Now that he was going to see her once more he knew what the long separation from her had meant to him. He had known the living death. Within a few hours he would have at least some moments of life. They would be terrible moments, shameful—but they would take him back into life. Fiercely, passionately, he looked forward to them.

He left his letter at the hotel, giving it into the hands of a weary Albanian night porter. Then he returned to his rooms, undressed, washed in cold water, and lay down on his bed. And presently he was praying in the dark, instinctively almost as a child prays. He was praying for the impossible. For he believed that it was absolutely impossible that Rosamund could ever forgive him for what he had done, and yet he prayed that she might forgive him. And he felt as if he were praying with all his body as well as with all his soul.

In the dawn he was tired. But he did not sleep at all. About ten o'clock he went out to take the boat to Eyub.

## CHAPTER XVI

AT a few minutes past eleven Dion was in the vast cemetery on the hill. It was a grey morning, still and hot. Languor was in the air. The greyness, the silence, the oily waters, suggested a brooding resignation. The place of the dead was almost deserted. He wandered through it, and met only two or three Turks, who returned his glance impassively.

After the sleepless night he had come out feeling painfully excited and scarcely master of himself. In Galata and on the boat he had not dared to look into the eyes of those who thronged about him. He had felt transparent, as if all his thoughts and his tumultuous feelings must be visible to anyone who regarded him with attention. But now he was encompassed by a sensation of almost dull calmness. He looked at the greyness and at the innumerable graves, he was conscious of the stagnant heat, he seemed to draw into himself the wide silence, and the excitement faded out of him, was replaced by a curious inertia. Both his mind and his body felt tired and resigned. The gravestones suggested death, the end of the

earthly hopes, aspirations, yearnings and despairs of men. A few bones and a headstone—to that he was travelling. And yet all through the night he had been on fire with longing, and with a fear that had seemed almost red hot. Now he thought he perhaps understood the fatalism of the Turk. Whatever must be must be. All was written surely from the beginning. It was written that to-day he should be alone in the cemetery of Eyub, and it was written that Rosamund should come to him there, or not come to him.

If she did not come ?

He remembered the exact wording of his letter to her, and he realized for the first time that in her letter she had asked him to tell her how to go to their meeting-place "if it is difficult," and that he had not told her what she had to do in order to come to Eyub.

But of course she had a dragoman, and he would bring her. She could not possibly come alone.

Perhaps, however, she would not come.

Long ago she had opened and read his letter and had taken her decision. If she were coming, probably she was already on the way. He forced himself to imagine the whole day passed by him alone in the cemetery, the light failing as the evening drew on, the darkness of night swallowing up Stamboul, the knowledge forced upon him that Rosamund had abandoned the idea of seeing him again. He imagined himself returning to Constantinople in the night, going to the Hôtel de Byzance and learning that she had left by the Orient express of that day for England.

What would he feel ?

A handful of bones and a headstone ! Whatever happened to-day, and in the future, he was on his way to just that. Then why agonize, why allow himself to be riven and tormented by longings and fears that seemed born out of something eternal ? Perhaps, indeed, there was nothing at all after this short life was ended, nothing but the blank greyness of eternal unconsciousness. If so, how little even his love for Rosamund meant. It must be just some bodily attraction, some imperious call to his flesh which he had mistaken for a far greater thing. Men, perhaps, are merely tricked by those longings of theirs which seem defiant of time, by those passionate tendernesses in which eternity seems breathing. All that they think they live by may be illusion.

Mechanically, as the minutes drew on towards noon, he walked towards the Tekkeh of the Dervishes. Once he had

come here to meet Cynthia Clarke, and now he had deliberately chosen the same place for the terrible interview with his wife. It could only be terrible. He did not know what he was going to do and say when she came (if she did come), but he did know that somehow he would tell her the whole truth about himself, without, of course, mentioning the name of a woman. He would lay bare his soul. It was fitting that he should confess his sin in the place of its beginnings. He had begun to sin against the woman whom he could never unlove here in this wilderness of the dead, when he had spoken against her to the woman who had long ago resolved some day to make him sin. (He told himself now that he had definitely spoken against Rosamund.) In this sad place of disordered peace, under the grey, and within sight of the minarets lifted to the Unknown God, he had opened the book of evil things; in this place he would close it for ever—if Rosamund came. He felt now that there was something within him which, despite all his perversity, all that he had given himself to in the fury of the flesh, was irrevocably dedicated to that which was sane, clean and healthy. By this he was resolved to live henceforth, not because of any religious feeling, not because of any love of that Unknown God who—so he supposed—had flung him into the furnace of suffering as refuse may be flung into a fire, but because he now began to understand that this dedicated something was really Him, was of the core of his being, not to be rooted out. He had left Cynthia Clarke. In a short time—before the grey faded over the minarets of Stamboul—Rosamund would have done with him for ever. He faced complete solitude, the wilderness without any human soul, good or bad, to keep him company; but he faced it with a sort of hard and final resignation. By nightfall he would have done with it all. And then—the living Death? Yes, no doubt that would be his portion. He smiled faintly as he thought of his furious struggle against just that.

"It is written," he thought. "Everything is written. But we are tricked into a semblance of vigorous life and energy by our great delusion that we possess free will."

He sat down beneath a cypress and remained quite still, looking downward towards the water, downward along the path by which, if Rosamund came, she would ascend the hill towards him.

It was nearly noon when he saw below him on this path the figure of a woman walking slowly. She was followed by a man.

Dion got up. He could not really see who this woman was, but he knew who she was. Instantly he knew. And instantly all the calm, all the fatalism of which for a moment he had believed himself possessed, all the brooding resignation of the man who says to his soul, "It is written!" was swept away. He stood there, bare of his pretences, and he knew himself for what he was, just a man who was the prisoner of a great love, a man shaken by the tempest of his feeling, a man who would, who must, fight against that living Death which, only a moment before, he had been contemplating even with a smile.

She had come, and with her life.

He put one arm against the seamed trunk of the cypress. Mechanically, and unaware what he was doing, he had taken off his hat. He held it in his hand. All the change which sorrow and excess had wrought upon him was exposed for Rosamund to see. She had last seen him plainly as he drove away with little Robin from the Green Court of Welsley on that morning of fate. Now at last she was to see him again as she had remade him.

She came on slowly. Presently she turned to her Greek dragoman.

"Where's the Tekkeh? Is it much farther?"

"No, Madame."

He pointed. As he did so Rosamund saw Dion's figure standing against the cypress. She stood still. Her face was white and drawn, but full of an almost flaming resolution. The mysticism which at moments Dion had detected in her expression, in her eyes, during the years passed with her, a mysticism then almost evasive, subtly withdrawn, shone now, like a dominating quality which scorned to hide itself, or perhaps could not hide itself. She looked like a woman under the influence of a fixed purpose, fascinated, drawn onward, almost in ecstasy, and yet somehow, somewhere, tormented.

"Please go back to the foot of the hill," she said to the Greek who was with her.

"But, Madame, I dare not leave you alone here."

"I shall not be alone."

The Greek looked surprised.

"Some one is waiting for me, up there, by that cypress—a—a friend."

"Oh—I see, Madame."

With a look of intense comprehension he turned to go.

"At the foot of the hill, please!" said Rosamund.

"Certainly, Madame."

The dragoman was smiling as he walked away. Rosamund stood still watching him till he was out of sight. Then she turned. The figure of a man was still standing motionless under the old cypress tree among the graves. She set her lips together and went towards it. Now that she saw Dion, even though he was in the distance, she felt again intensely, as if in her flesh, the bodily wrong he had done to her. She strove not to feel this. She told herself that, after her sin against him, she had no right to feel it. In her heart she knew that she was the greater sinner. She realized now exactly the meaning of what she had done. She had no more illusions about herself, about her conduct. She condemned herself utterly. She had come to that place of the dead absolutely resolved to ask forgiveness of Dion. And yet now that she saw his body the sense of personal outrage woke in her, gripped her. She grew hot, she tingled. A fierce jealousy of the flesh tormented her. And suddenly she was afraid of herself. Was her body then more powerful than her soul? Was she, who had always so cared for the things of the soul, hopelessly physical? It seemed to her that even now she might succumb to what she supposed was an overwhelming personal pride, that even now she might be unable to do what she had come all the long way from England to do. But she forced herself to go onward up the path. She looked down; she would not see that body of a man which had belonged to her and to which she had belonged; but she made herself go towards it.

Presently she felt that she was drawing near to it; then that she was close to it. Then she stopped. Standing still for a moment she prayed. She prayed that she might be able in this supreme crisis of her life to govern the baser part of herself, that she might be allowed, might be helped, to rise to those heights of which Father Robertson had spoken to her, that she might at last realize the finest possibilities of her nature, that she might be able to do the most difficult thing, to be humble, to forget any injury which had been inflicted upon herself, and to remember only the tremendous injury she had inflicted upon another. When her prayer was finished she did not know whether it had been heard, whether, if it had been heard, it had been accepted and would be granted. She did not know at all what she would be able to do. But she looked up and saw Dion. He was close to her, was standing just in front of her, with one arm holding the

cypress trunk, trembling slightly and gazing at her, gazing at her with eyes that were terrible because they revealed so much of agony, of love and of terror. She looked into those eyes, she looked at the frightful change written on the face that had once been so familiar to her, and suddenly an immense pity inundated her. It seemed to her that she endured in that moment all the suffering which Dion had endured since the tragedy at Welsley added to her own suffering. She stood there for a moment looking at him. Then she said only :

" Forgive me, oh, forgive me ! "

Tears rushed into her eyes. She had been able to say it. It had not been difficult to say. She could not have said anything else. And her soul had said it as well as her lips.

" Forgive me ! Forgive me ! " she repeated.

She went up to Dion, took his poor tortured temples, from which the hair, once so thick, had retreated, in her hands, and whispered again in the midst of her tears :

" Forgive me ! "

" I've been false to you," he said huskily. " I've broken my vow to you. I've lived with another woman—for months. I've been a beast. I've wallowed. I've gone right down. Everything horrible—I've—I've done it. Only last night I meant to—to—I only broke away from it all last night. I heard you were here and then I—I——"

" Forgive me."

She felt as if God were speaking in her, through her. She felt as if in that moment God had taken complete possession of her, as if for the first time in her life she was just an instrument, formed for the carrying out of His tremendous purposes, able to carry them out. Awe was upon her. But she felt a strange joy, and even a wonderful sense of peace.

" But you don't hear what I tell you. I have been false to you. I have sinned against you for months and months."

" Hush ! It was my sin."

" Yours ? Oh, Rosamund ! "

She was still holding his temples. He put his hands on her shoulders.

" Yes, it was my sin. I understand now how you love me. I never understood till to-day."

" Yes, I love you."

" Then," she said, very simply, " I know you will be able to forgive me. Don't tell me any more ever about what you have done. It's blotted out. Just forgive me—and let us begin again."

She took away her hands from his temples. He did not kiss her, but he took one of her hands, and they stood side by side looking towards Stamboul, towards the City of the Unknown God. His eyes, and hers, were on the minarets, those minarets which seem to say to those who have come to them from afar, and whose souls are restless :

" In the East thou shalt find me if thou hast not found me in the West."

After a long silence Rosamund pressed Dion's hand, and it seemed to him that never, in the former days of their union—not even in Greece—had she pressed it with such tenderness, with such pulse-stirring intimacy and trust in him. Then, still with her eyes upon the minarets, she said in a low voice :

" I think Robin knows."

## CHAPTER XVII

NOT many days later, when the green valley of Olympia was wrapped in the peace of a sunlit afternoon, and a faint breeze drew from the pine trees on the hill of Kronos a murmur as of distant voices whispering the message of Eternity, the keeper of the house of the Hermes was disturbed in a profound reverie by the sound of slow footfalls not far from his dwelling. He stirred, lifted his head and stared vaguely about him. No travellers had come of late to the shrine he guarded. Hermes had been alone with the child upon his arm, dreaming of its unclouded future with the serenity of one who had trodden the paths where the gods walk, and who could rise at will above the shadowed ways along which men creep in anxiety, dreading false steps and the lurking dangers of their fates. Hermes had been alone with his happy burden, forgotten surely by the world which his delicate majesty ignored without disdain. But now pilgrims, perhaps from a distant land, were drawing near to look upon him, to spend a little while in the atmosphere of his shining calm, perhaps to learn something of the message he had to give to those who were capable of receiving it.

A man and a woman, moving slowly side by side, came

into the patch of strong sunshine which made a glory before the house, paused there and stood still.

From the shadow in which he was sitting the guardian examined them with the keen eyes of one who had looked upon travellers of many nations. He knew at once that the woman was English. As for the man—yes, probably he was English too. Dark, lean, wrinkled, he was no doubt an Englishman who had been much away from his own country, which the guardian conceived of as wrapped in perpetual fogs and washed by everlasting rains.

The guardian stared hard at this man, then turned his bright eyes again upon the woman. As he looked at her some recollection began to stir in his mind.

Not many travellers came twice to the green recesses of Elis. He was accustomed to brief acquaintanceships, closed by small gifts of money, and succeeded by farewells which troubled his spirit not at all. But this woman seemed familiar to him ; and even the man——

He got up from his seat and went towards them.

As he came into the sunlight the woman saw him and smiled. And, when she smiled, he knew he had seen her before. The deep gravity of her face as she approached had nearly tricked his memory, but now he remembered all about her. She was the beautiful fair Englishwoman who had camped on the hill of Drouva not so many years ago, who had gone out shooting with that young rascal, Dirmikis, and who had spent solitary hours wrapt in contemplation of the statue whose fame doubtless had brought her to Elis.

Not so many years ago ! But was this man the husband who had been with her then, and who had evidently been deeply in love with her ?

It seemed to the guardian that there was some puzzling change in the beautiful woman. As to the man—— Still wondering, the guardian took off his cap politely and uttered a smiling welcome in Greek. Then the man smiled too, faintly, and still preserving an under-look of deep gravity, and the guardian knew him. It was indeed the husband, but grown to look very much older, and different in some almost mysterious way.

The woman made a gesture towards the museum. The guardian bowed, turned and moved to lead the way through the vestibule into the great room of the Victory. But the woman spoke behind him and he paused. He did not understand what she had said, but the sound of her voice seemed

to plead with him—or to command him. He looked at her and understood.

She was gazing at him steadily, and her eyes told him not to go before her, told him to stay where he was.

He nodded his head, slightly pursing his small mouth. She knew the way of course. How should she not know it ?

Gently she came up to him and just touched his coat sleeve—to thank him. Then she went on slowly with her companion, traversed the room of the Victory, looking neither to right nor left, crossed the threshold of the smaller chamber beyond it and disappeared.

For a moment the guardian stood at gaze. Then he went back to his seat, sat down and sighed. A faint sense of awe had come upon him. He did not understand it, and he sighed again. Then, pulling himself together, he felt for a cigarette, lit it and began to smoke, staring at the patch of sunlight outside, and at the olive tree which grew close to the doorway.

. . . . . .

Within the chamber of the Hermes for a long time there was silence. Rosamund was sitting before the statue. Dion stood near to her, but not close to her. The eyes of both of them were fixed upon Hermes and the child. Once again they were greeted by the strange and exquisite hush which seems, like a divine sentinel, to wait at the threshold of that shrine in Elis ; once again the silence seemed to come out of the marble and to press softly against their two hearts. But they were changed, and so the great peace of the Hermes seemed to them subtly changed. They knew now the full meaning of torment—torment of the body and of the soul. They knew the blackness of rebellion. But they knew also, or at least were beginning to know, the true essence of peace. And this beginning of knowledge drew them nearer to the Hermes than they had been in the bygone years, than they had ever been before the coming of little Robin into their lives, and before Robin had left them, obedient to the call from the beyond.

The olive branch was gone from the doorway. Something beautiful was missing from the picture of Elis which had reminded Rosamund of the glimpse of distant country in Raphael's " Marriage of the Virgin." And they longed to have it there, that little olive branch—ah, how they longed ! There was pain at their hearts. But there was no longer the cruel fierceness of rebellion. They were able to gaze at

the child on whom Hermes was gazing, if not with his celestial serenity yet with a resignation that was even subtly mingled with something akin to gratitude.

"Shall we reach that goal and take a child with us?"

Long ago that had been Dion's thought in Elis. And long ago Rosamund had broken the silence within that room by the words:

"I'm trying to learn something here, how to bring *him* up if he ever comes."

And now God had given them a child, and God had taken him from them. Robin had gone from all that was not intended, but that, for some inscrutable reason, had come to be. Robin was in the released world.

As the twilight began to fall another twilight came back, flooding with its green dimness the memories of them both. And at last Rosamund spoke.

"Dion!"

"Yes."

"Come a little nearer to me."

He came close to her and stood beside her.

"Do you remember something you said to me here? It was in the twilight——"

She paused. Tears had come into her eyes and her voice had trembled.

"It was in the twilight. You said that it seemed to you as if Hermes were taking the child away, partly because of us."

Her voice broke.

"I—I disliked your saying that. I told you I couldn't feel that."

"I remember."

"And then you explained exactly what you meant. And we spoke of the human fear that comes to those who look at a child they love and think, "what is life going to do to the child?" This evening I want to tell you that in a strange way I am able to be glad that Robin has gone, glad with some part of me that is more mother than anything else in me, I think. Robin is—is so safe now."

The tears came thickly and fell upon her face. She put out a hand to Dion. He clasped it closely.

"God took him away, and perhaps because of us. I think it may have been to teach us, you and me. Perhaps we needed a great sorrow. Perhaps nothing else could have taught us something we had to learn."

"It may be so," he almost whispered.

She got up and leaned against his shoulder.

"Whatever happens to me in the future," she said, "I don't think I shall ever distrust God again."

He put his arm round her and, for the first time since their reunion, he kissed her, and she returned his kiss.

Over Elis the twilight was falling, a green twilight, sylvan and very ethereal, tremulous in its delicate beauty. It stole through the green doors, and down through the murmuring pine trees. The sheep-bells were ringing softly; the flocks were going homeward from pasture; and the chime of their little bells mingled with the wide whispering of the eternities among the summits of the pine trees. Music of earth mingled with the music from a distance that knew what the twilight knew.

Presently the two marble figures in the chamber of the Hermes began to fade away gradually, as if deliberately withdrawing themselves from the gaze of men. At last only their outlines were visible to Rosamund and to Dion. But even these told of the Golden Age, of the age of the long peace.

"Χαῖρε!"

Some one had said it within that chamber, and a second voice had echoed it.

As the guardian of the Hermes watched the two pilgrims walking slowly away down the valley he noticed that the man's right arm clasped the woman's waist. And, so, they passed from his sight and were taken by the green twilight of Elis.

THE END

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[P.T.O.

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